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WIN! WIN! WIN!
McQUEEN'S MACHINES



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DIRTBIKE

DAVE THORPE
**THERE'S LIFE
IN THE OLD
TOP DOG!**

"WE WENT TO AFRICA AND
DID SOME HUNTING. I GUESS
YOU WOULDN'T CALL IT HUNTING
— IT WAS MORE JUST KILLING —
BUT IT WAS A LOT OF FUN"

RYAN VILLOPOTO
**HOLESHOTS AND
CRACK SHOTS!**

KANE SUGAR!
**IRELAND'S
LITTLE MISS
DYNAMITE**

"NEXT YEAR I WANT
TO WIN THE WORLD
CHAMPIONSHIP"

RAISING THE ROOF!

SHEFFIELD SUPERCROSS ★ PARIS BERCY ★ LAS VEGAS ENDURO CROSS
WELCOME TO THE GREAT INDOORS



THE DIRT BIKE SHOW.

2007

6-9 December
Stoneleigh Park

Authorised Dealers attending:

Rocket centre B13:Hall 2

St Blazey E30 & E37:Hall 3

Ride MX G40/41/42:Hall 1

Middleton MX G46/47/48:Hall 1

Motopress F22 :Hall 3

D&K Motorcycles
F12/13/14/15 :Hall 3

COME AND SEE FOX AT THE DIRT BIKE SHOW
STAND A03 : HALL 2

A man with short brown hair, looking directly at the camera, wearing a black and white Fox motocross jersey. The jersey features various logos including 'Moto', 'SUZUKI', 'FOX', 'PER', 'ZIPP', 'KAYAK', and 'KAYAK'. He is holding a black and white patterned bag or piece of clothing. The background is a blue sky with white clouds.

BLITZ REF OVER

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SOLE UK IMPORTER
Tel: 01792-472000
info@dsmoffroad.com

TOM CHURCH

SIXSIXONE FACTORY RIDER

MOLSON KAWASAKI





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THE DIRTIS!

January

2008

DIRTBIKE
RIDER

COMMENT

DECK THE halls with boughs of holly, fa la la la la, la la la la, tis the season to be jolly, fa la la la la, la la la la... Yep, Christmas is upon us, the goose (not to mention various DBR staff) is getting fat and another year in the dirt is drawing to a close. And all-in-all I reckon 2007 has been pretty kind to British off-road fans.

In the land of motocross Billy MacKenzie and Tommy Searle have won GPs and Tommy's advanced to a pretty-bloody-good second in the world plus we've also got a new world champion in the shape of 44-year-old Dave Thorpe. Apart from a cover shot a few issues back we've not really given DT the respect his fourth world title deserves so hopefully we've redressed the balance a little with this month's six-page feature illustrated by Nick Haskell's brilliantly evocative back-in-the-day images.

If I had to put money on who would be our next world champ then – apart from DT making it #5 in 2008 – it'd have to go on Tommy. I'm not saying it's by any means a cert but the only thing that's increased more than his maturity this season has been his speed. It's been a steep learning curve for Tommy but if he keeps improving at this rate who knows what he's capable of next season? At the very least he should be making life difficult for our favourite Sicilian...

It's only human nature that people are always looking for the next big thing and while Tommy was cleaning up in the Lites class at Sheffield the next next big thing was running away with the BW85cc division before nipping across to Paris to successfully defend his Prince of Bercy crown. I haven't seen Max Anstie since he was ripping up dad Merv's junior SX track on a Husky auto back in Y2K and it was great to watch all that promise he was demonstrating seven years ago coming to fruition. And it was equally encouraging to speak to him afterwards and discover that despite the pressures of signing for the factory KTM team Max is incredibly easy-going with his feet firmly on the ground.

Over in enduros we've not had a world champ this season but Tom Sagar's had a stellar year in the WEC's EJ class to finish in third and then backed that up with an impressive performance at the ISDE. I know a few MX riders who view enduros as a bit of a soft touch but by and large – discounting Johnny Aubert – it's the trials guys who find the switch to woods racing a little easier. Tom's following in the footsteps of probably the most successful trials rider turned enduro rider ever, David Knight – and the big man has had a pretty good season of his own, overcoming all sorts of problems to win the coveted AMA GNCC crown. Good work Big Foot!

Trials has been a little less of a happy hunting ground but our ladies did successfully defend their TdN title and Michael Brown lifted a world crown of his own so the Brits are still keeping their end up on the feet-up side of things.

Finally this month I want to say a few words about a good, good mate of everyone in the DBR and T+MX offices and for that matter just about everybody else who were lucky enough to meet him. Tony Macari died at his home near Stoke-on-Trent last month after falling down the stairs and sustaining fatal head injuries. Tony had a huge heart and a huge personality and from the moment he joined our advertising sales team in 2005 to the moment he left earlier this year he made this building a fun-filled, better place to work. Our hearts go out to his wife Michelle and his young daughters Olivia Grace and Ella Sofia.

Tony Macari – always up for the craic



Sean

CRUSTY CRUCIAL INFO

Date	Venue	
January 3	Manchester Arena (two shows)	0844 847 8000
January 5	London Wembley Arena	0870 060 0870
January 8	Birmingham NIA	0871 945 6000
January 11	Belfast Odyssey	028 9073 9074

Tickets on sale now through www.bookingsdirect.com or phone **0870 735 5000**. For more info go to www.crusty.com

DIRTBIKE
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Editorial address:
DBR magazine
12 Victoria St
Morecambe
LA4 4AG

Editor
Sean Lawless
Tel: 01524 834077 Fax: 01524 425469
sean.lawless@dirtbikerider.co.uk

Deputy Dawg
Anthony Sutton
anthony.sutton@dirtbikerider.co.uk

Arsey Arty Types
Graham, Chopsy and Large Marge

New Media Manager
Jude Oakley

Technical Eejit
Geoff Walker
geoffwalker@dirtbikerider.co.uk

Youth Editor
AN Other

US Editor
Steve Cox
www.coxmx.com

Classified Origination
Stuart Box, Richard Harrison
and David Chu

Subscriptions
Anne Pardula
Tel: 01524 834030

Admin Manager
Sarah Hodgkinson

Marketing & Promotions
Rocky Wilkinson
Tel: 01524 834013

Commercial Manager
James Wilson
james.wilson@dirtbikerider.co.uk

Advertising
Phil Armitage/Sophie Elder
Tel: 01524 834012/834030
dbi.ads@dirtbikerider.co.uk

Contributors
Jonty Edmunds, Billy MacKenzie,
Stevie Mills, still-mx.co.uk, Roger
Harvey, Mike Gurney, Stephen Sword,
Gordon Crookard, Alex Hodgkinson,
Jack Burnicle, Neil Drew, Magnus
Andersson, Tony Marshall, Nick
Haskell, Mike Wood, Jon O'Connell,
Steve Matthes and Frank Hoppen

Merchandising
Tel: 01524 834030

Managing Director
Tom Ferguson
Tel: 01524 834076
tom.ferguson@lep.co.uk



CRUSTY COMETH!

Nate Adams headlines UK freestyle frenzy

THE WAIT is almost over and in just a few weeks time the Crusty Demons Unleashed Tour will hit the UK led by world #1 freestyle rider Nate Adams.

The American's just taken victory in the Dew Tour – the biggest freestyle competition on the planet – to underline his status as the undisputed king of FMX. And when the Crustys kick off in Manchester on January 3 he'll be joined by X-Games gold medallist Adam Jones and Mike Mason who filled the other two steps on the Dew Tour box.

After Manchester the four-date tour moves to London, Birmingham and Belfast. The shows are three-hour freestyle spectacles that have been shined and refined in super-successful tours of America, Australia, New Zealand and India. January's dates will be the first chance for UK fans to catch the Crusty Demons in live action.



The shows will mark the comeback of world #3 Blake 'Bilko' Williams who's spent the best part of 2007 on the sidelines after screwing up his ankle when he bailed out of a ruler flip at the opening round of the Dew Tour. "I'm one week away from getting back on my bike after six months off injured," says the Aussie. "My first shows back will be the UK tour, I'm pumped!"

Crusty tours are used to playing in front of sell-out crowds and the UK dates should be no different after Joel Balchin whipped up a media storm with a series of back-flipping demos in front of famous British landmarks including Tower Bridge in London and Old Trafford in Manchester. "I had a ball over there last month doing the launches," reckons Joel. "Can't wait to get back over there and throw it down for the pommie crowd!"

WIN!WIN!WIN!

Crusty Demons tickets

THE CRUSTY Demons Unleashed Tour is the UK's must-see FMX event of the year and we've teamed up with Aussie promoters Rush Sports to give away two family tickets worth over £100 each. Winners will be able to pick a venue of their choice and each family ticket will guarantee a night to remember for two adults and two kids.

To be in with a shout of winning all you need to do is tell us which of the following riders was a star of the original Crusty Demons of Dirt movie?

- Was it: **A)** Blake Williams
B) Seth Enslow
C) William Shatner
D) Blake's Seven

Think you know the answer? Well write it down on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope and send it to us – along with your name, address and a daytime telephone number – to 'Crusty Comp', DBR, 12 Victoria Street, Morecambe, Lancs LA4 4AG. Alternatively, hook up to our website at www.dirtbikerider.com and follow the comps link.

Time's tight on this one so entries close at noon on December 18 with the first two correct answers chosen totally at random getting the tickets.

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Dirt Bike Rider,
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LA4 4AG

Tel: 01524 833111
Fax: 01524 425469

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**Cover: Tommy Searle
tears up the track at
the Sheffield SX
(Sutty)**

**Contents: More Lites
action from Sheffield as
Elliot Banks-Browne
leaves the first lap
carnage behind
(Sutty)**

WIN!WIN!WIN!

'McQueen's Machines – The Cars and Bikes of a Hollywood Icon'

OKAY, OKAY, hands in the air time! **Steve McQueen** isn't exactly an off-road hero in the same vein as **Dave Thorpe** or **Jeremy McGrath** or even the mighty **Sully Suttoufferson**. And, as the title suggests, **'McQueen's Machines – The Cars and Bikes of a Hollywood Icon'** also features those metal box things with a wheel at each corner.

But having seen **On Any Sunday** about a trillion times from the age of seven to 17 at various club presentation evenings, he gets my vote as a major hero in my formative years – and that was before I saw classic movies like **Bullitt**, **Le Mans**, **The Getaway** and perennial Christmas cracker **The Great Escape**. Gosh darn, I can even forgive him the huge turkey that was **The Towering Inferno**!

Away from the silver screen **McQueen** was a dedicated dirt bike nut as documented in **Bruce Brown's** awesome **On Any Sunday** and along with his buddy **Bud Ekins** (check out this month's Burnicle's Beat) made up part of the first American Vase team entered into the **ISDT** in **1964**.

Published as a **176-page** hardback and featuring a foreword by Steve's son **Chad**, **'McQueen's Machines'** is an in-depth examination at the Hollywood legend's major petrolhead tendencies and looks at his personal stable of cars and bikes, the metal he made famous in his films and on the racetrack and the legacy he left behind. Essential reading for dads and magazine editors!

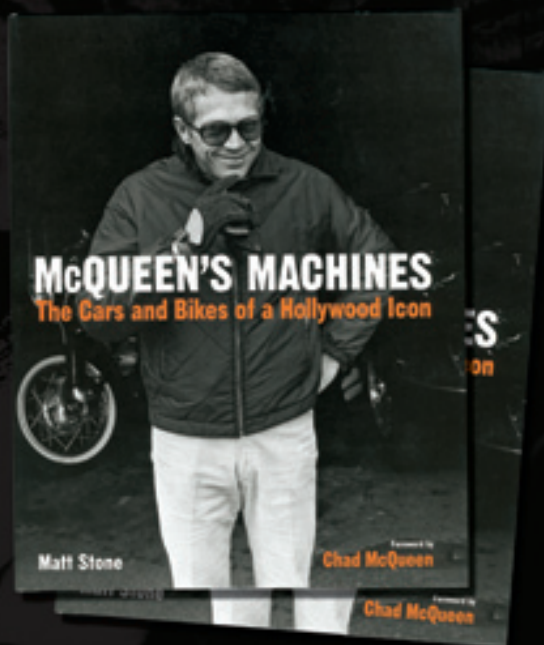
'McQueen's Machines' is priced at **£16.99** and available in all good bookshops but we've got **10 copies** to give away this month and all you have to do to be in with a chance of winning is complete this famous **Steve McQueen** quote...

"Racing is life! Anything that happens before or after is just..."

- A) "waiting"
- B) "killing time"
- C) "boring"
- D) "trials"

Think you know the answer? Well write it down on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope and send it to us at **'McQueen's Machines'**, DBR, 12 Victoria St, Morecambe, Lancs LA4 4AG. Alternatively you can enter by hooking up to **www.dirtbikerider.com**

Closing date is **January 11** with the first 10 correct entries chosen at random getting a copy.



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ANDERS TO BMW

Swede joins German giants

THEY'VE GOT Joel Smets handling development, Gordon Crockard racing the GNCC series for them and now BMW have underlined just how serious they are with their new off-road project by signing up enduro legend Anders Eriksson to contest the 2008 WEC.

The seven-time world champ will be joined by three-time Belgian champ Jeff Goblet and young German Bert Meyer but it's the Swede that the mighty BMW will be looking to for the big results.

"For me this is like a second start in my racing career," reckons Anders. "The team already demonstrated great professionalism this year. I have now tested the 450 and I am really enthusiastic. I feel highly motivated and of course I am out to achieve good results to show the bike's potential – as well as demonstrating what an experienced warhorse like myself is capable of."

HALLAM HEROES

World's best at Sheffield

WHEN YOU'VE polished off the port, tucked away the turkey and munched all the mince pies and need some excitement to kick start those digestive juices you could do a lot worse than heading up to the Hallam FM Arena on December 29 for the 13th edition of the Sheffield Indoor Trial.

For the second year running the legendary event won't have world championship status which means promoters Avondale Management can do what they bloody well like. And as Neil Crosswaite and Mart Lampkin are both proud Yorkshiremen it means they'll like what they bloody well do n'all!

And with good reason! Sheffield '06 was a storming event and this year's trial promises to be even better thanks to an exciting new format that sees the five confirmed riders – Toni Bou, Adam Raga, Dougie Lampkin, Takahisa Fujinami and James Dabill – joined by an up-and-coming British Lion who will have to qualify from a three-man ride-off at the start of the evening.

The three young guns in question are world Junior champ Michael Brown, Alexz Wigg and Ross Danby and they'll go head-to-head over one lap of six sections.

Tickets – priced at £28.50 for adults and £19.50 for under 14s – always sell out so don't expect to simply roll up on the evening and pay on the gate. To book your seats go to www.indoor-trials.com or call the box office on 0114 256 5656.

If you want to large it up at Sheffield there are some VIP packages left. For £89.95 you'll get pre-entry through the VIP entrance, complimentary food and drink, meet all the riders, enjoy VIP seating and have an audience with Dougie Lampkin afterwards. For more info go to www.g2fshop.com or call 0161 705 2284.



GORDON CROCKARD

OFF IT! ON IT!

GORDY GOES DOWN HARD AT SHEFFIELD AND THEN PARTIES HARD IN IRELAND...

WORDS BY GORDON CROCKARD

WHAT A joy it is to look back over time. Writing a column every month gives me that chance but in years past that would have been a huge mental challenge for me and selected friends as November was a month of bars, clubs and pubs. When we were in our early 20s the social side and party lifestyle hit full throttle in November as it was completely the end of our racing season and time to celebrate, unwind and finally relax after being dedicated to racing for 10 solid months beforehand.

Rocket fuel intake was often the case and not surprisingly this resulted in not remembering a whole lot. October was renamed Bloctober and November became Norember so if I was writing a column in those days it would have been tough! But now I'm a responsible 28-year-old adult I have plenty to write about in November.

At the Sheffield Supercross I was on it and dying to run up front. I rode a 450 PAR Honda and holeshot my heat and lead for the whole race until Jeff Alessi pushed past in the last turn. In the final Mike Brown ran into Alessi who ran into me in the first turn and I got punted off the track and went down. Away last and fully hacked off about it too. But it got worse as during my raging effort to climb the leaderboard I caught a plastic haybale cover with my footpeg and flew through the air backwards, landing full impact onto my just healed shoulder. I broke all the scar tissue around the original break of my collarbone and knackered a ligament in there too. Good news is that the collarbone didn't break which is a sign that it itself is strong.

My bike was pretty beat up and I felt awful handing it back to the PAR team like that. Sorry Rowly! I must take this opportunity to thank PAR Homes Honda Racing and Rowly and Claire especially for taking me on and having me part of the team this year.

I was meant to be racing a German SX at Stuttgart the weekend after but had to miss it because of my shoulder. The same weekend was Bercy so I watched that on TV instead.

WRC came to Ireland for the first time ever and it was fantastic to say the least. The opening stage was held at Stormont in Belfast and I gave going to it in person a miss and instead watched it on the telly so I got to see a lot more but missed out on the noise and atmosphere. Let's hope Rally Ireland is an annual fixture on the WRC calendar for years to come.

The same weekend I flew over to Newcastle Upon Tyne to give out the prizes at the North East centre and club presentation. Nigel Roe took care of me all weekend and I was able to call in at Custom Lids' shop to visit and have a

catch up and chat with Kev who sponsored me. Thanks for lunch Kev. The prize-giving was held at Sunderland's Stadium of Light ground – or, as Newcastle United fans call it, Stadium of Sh***! I had a fun night and signed way too many body parts for anyone's good but that seemed to be what the North East wanted and I was the man with the permanent marker. Good luck scrubbing it off. Ouch!

Because of going over for the presentation I missed out on riding the two-hour cross country race at Mount Panther. All my buddies rode it and enjoyed it so I was sorry to miss the craic on the track.

Newtownards and District held their 20th Charity Sporting Dinner recently and for the sixth year running I went along to be among the distinguished guests also in formal attendance. During the night between Jeremy McWilliams and myself we arranged to go to the Mourne Mountains on the trials bikes early the next morning. The dinner went on very late and I got home around 4.30am so just four-and-a-half hours later I was up and heading to the Mournes. Neil Hodgson and Leon Haslam were over for another formal dinner that night so Jezza wanted to get them down the Mournes on the trial bikes for a good day's banter. It was a mega craic and we all had a blast.

I thought I was knackered from the night before but that was nothing compared to what was ahead. I went straight from the trials outing back up to Belfast and straight back into my tux and to the next formal dinner for another charge at it. Well, that night was again another belter and I finally made it to bed at 5am. Trouble was I was getting picked up at 8am to go down south to Dundalk for a training school to raise funds for the MXdN team's trip to America last September. I actually slept in my tux – that's how posh I am!

The school was on a Saturday and everyone knows Saturday night only comes once a week so I did as every other normal Irishman would do – I went out. That day had been the last round of the P&O supermoto series and I had arranged to meet friends who were having a night out to celebrate their championship results. Well, while doing that I ran into a couple of guys I used to race youth MX with and hadn't seen in ages so the fun and laughter were flowing and before we knew it we were still out and it was 3am. Suddenly I decided it was bedtime! An action-packed weekend indeed but you couldn't get on like that for long before something gives. Thankfully I have stamina in abundance!



WIN! WIN! WIN!

A pair of Gaerne SG-10 boots

BEYONCE KNOWLES would be reet jealous if she thought there was something even more bootylicious than her bad self – especially something leathery, tough and Italian. While you might think we're on about something posy like a Prada handbag you'd be more wrong than an incestuous iguana in Iceland (that's the country and not Kerry Catona's supermarket of choice) because we are of course talking about a pair of Gaerne SG-10s – some of the most bootylicious motocross boots in our sport!

The SG-10s are without doubt some of the strongest, most protective motocross boots available today and the high-quality, Italian-made, fantastic footwear is imported into the UK by the good folks at Malcolm Rathmell Sport (www.malcolmrathmellsport.com) who have been most generous in offering a free pair to one of our lucky readers in either white or black. To be in with a shot of winning the free boots – and believe us free boots are the best kind of boots – all you have to do is answer this oh-so easy Gaerne boots related question.

Which rider won the final round of the 2007 MX2 Maxxis British motocross championships at Pontrilas while wearing a pair of slinky SG-10s?

- Was it: **A)** Jason Dougan
B) Jason Crump
C) Jason and the Argonauts
D) David Jason

When you think you know the answer – and it's not hard, eh – write it down on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope along with your name, address, a daytime telephone number and the size and colour of boot you'll require then stick a stamp on it and send it to us at – 'Boots (no, not the chemist) Comp', DBR Magazine, 12 Victoria Street, Morecambe, Lancashire LA4 4AG. The first randomly drawn correct entry after our closing date of January 17 will win a pair of lovely Gaerne SG-10s. If you're too tight to buy a stamp then enter online at www.dirtbikerider.com



Matching stilettos
are just out of shot

FASHION FAUX PAS!

Motocrossers with handbags – part one!

IT'S LONG been said that Belgium's the land that fashion forgot but hold your bleedin' horses meat – it looks like ex-British champ Ken De Dycker is doing his bit to change our unfair preconceptions by sporting this slinky and oh-so stylish silver little number!

Our man on the continent Alex Hodgkinson snapped Ken with Jeremy Van Horebeek and MX1 world champ Steve Ramon as they posed for a Team Belgium photo at the recent MXdN. But no matter where he's from, there's no forgiving those shorts – no Kenny, that's a bad Kenny!

TOTAL RECALL

KTM call back bikes for urgent fuel cap changes

IF YOU own a full-size bike from either the 2006 or '07 KTM off-road ranges then you'd best get on the blower to your local orange dealership – no, not Freddie Faraday's Fruit and Veg Emporium we mean your one-stop local KTM shop – to arrange a time when you can get your bike's fuel cap changed for an updated one free-of-charge.

All owners can check online to see if their bike is affected by heading to the service area of www.ktm.co.uk then entering their chassis and delivery certificate number. And fear ye not if your prized Austrian weapon is a parallel import because KTM will sort your fuel cap for free too – what jolly nice chaps, as the actress once said to the cowboy.

HIP JOINT!

Two of the dirt bike industry's coolest brands tea –up to go racing!

TWO OF the most individual and recognisable brands in off-road sport have teamed up to take on the best in the AMA supercross and supermoto series. Muc-Off – one of Britain's top bike cleaning products companies – have become a technical sponsor for the Troy Lee Designs race team who'll be supporting Gavin Gracyk, Chris Gosselaar, Jeff Ward and David Pingree among others in the 2008 Stateside season.

Style icon, pro-pimper and all-round race fan Troy Lee is delighted to have Muc-Off onboard. "We're thrilled they have stepped up their relationship in the US MX industry to become a sponsor of our team this year. As an extremely effective and safe bike cleaner – as well as a company with attitude – the brand is a perfect fit with the team and mechanics.

"Muc-Off is a new brand to the US market but I can already see it will become a leader in no time! We welcome them aboard and we look forward to a great season."

STEPHEN SWORD

FESTIVE FUN!

IT'S ALMOST CHRISTMAS TIME IN THE SWORDY HOUSEHOLD AND THAT MEANS CLIFF RICHARD CDs, MISTLETOE AND MULLED WINE FOR STEPHEN AND JODIE

WORDS BY STEPHEN SWORD PHOTO BY KAWASAKI

THIS MONTH has been jam-packed with lots of stuff. We had a week's holiday in Dubai which was fantastic. Well deserved I would say after the last couple of years with all the injuries and that. The week's break was very relaxing and I took advantage of that as much as I could as when I got back it was straight into training.

We're a good five weeks into the training programme. I'm happy so far with everything and every day is about working towards next season. My leg and ankle are strong now both on and off the bike. I've been riding the bikes most weeks – only play riding really – getting my confidence and feeling back. I feel as though I'm where I want to be with everything at this time of the year, it's important to put in a lot of hard work now but also make sure you don't burn yourself out before the season starts.

We haven't tested the '08 bikes yet – that will start in the first week of January. I wasn't able to go with the team to Japan in October but they tell me that the new kit is very good. I have a new mechanic for next year – Ryan Thorpe will be working the spanners for me. We have already been out riding together and all is gelling well.

Kawasaki asked me to go up to the NEC Bike Show on press day. I missed the show last year so it was cool to do some interviews and signings on the Kwacker stand. I'm looking forward to the Dirt Bike Show at Stoneleigh as it mostly revolves around motocross which I like. I'll be there on Saturday and Sunday – let's hope Hot Tub has his ice skates ready for Saturday night.

I've done a few presentations already, it's been great seeing all the young kids giving 100 per cent – hopefully a few MX champions in the making. They have all been nice clubs and made it really enjoyable to be there so thanks!

Some of you may have heard me on Eurosport the other week commentating on the Bercy SX with Roger Warren. Rog rang me at the last minute and as it was only just down the road I thought it would be cool. It was all going well until Roger asked me about the dancing girls. I didn't know what to do knowing Jodie was sat at home listening. I had the option of agreeing with him and sleeping in the car when I got home or saying nothing and having a nice warm bed to sleep in – I chose the second option. I really enjoyed it even though I was rubbish. I'm definitely not going to be the next Murray Walker.

Last weekend Jodie had me doing chores around the house. She's been asking me for weeks to put up this toilet holder and I eventually got round to doing it along with some light fittings and blinds.

With Christmas just around the corner we've done some shopping – mostly for Christmas decorations. Jodie wants to go big on the décor this year and we're having two trees fully loaded with all the trimmings as well as lights out the front. It'll look like the house out of National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation and my electricity bill will be triple what it normally is.

We are off up to Scotland for Christmas Day which will be good. I get a week-and-a-half off from training so I'm looking forward to some mulled wine and mince pies – not too many though. The next day we'll have Jodie's family round at our place. I'm not sure what's happening for New Year yet. We may go up to Edinburgh – it's awesome there on New Year's Eve.

Well guys have a great Christmas and all the best for the New Year. If you're at Stoneleigh I'll see ya there!

Handwritten signature: Stephen Sword #4





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Battle Stations!

*When the gate drops the bullsh*t stops and there's certainly plenty of bovine brown stuff splattering all over the US-based internet forums at the moment. The reason? The start of the AMA SX series of course but with no Ricky Carmichael in the mix this year we reckon the only debate is who's going to get third behind James Stewart and Chad Reed...*

Photo: Frank Hoppen



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BLARNEY

WORDS BY STEVIE MILLS PHOTO BY JUSTIN REID

GOODBYE GORDY!

IT'S WITH A HEAVY HEART THAT OUR MAN IN IRELAND WISHES THE CROCK STAR ALL THE BEST FOR HIS NEW AMERICAN ADVENTURE...

HAPPY CHRISTMAS and best wishes for 2008 fellow muck lovers! Having just returned from Santa's number one helper – aka Stephen Russell's motorcycle shop – it looks like the man with the big white beard will be in need of a bigger sleigh this year.

Personally, while I love getting into the festive spirit, I can't wait for January 1. It's a new page in the diary of life, a clean sheet to work with for the next 12 months and, without any doubt, with the New Year will come many new adventures.

Speaking of which, just as I will be nursing my first hangover of 2008, a certain Mr Gordon Crockard will be flying across the Atlantic Ocean en-route to the US of A. So it's with mixed feelings that I write this month's Blarney. Ireland, the British championship series and indeed the GP paddocks of Europe will be a much less colourful place without the Crock Star.

Gordon has signed a two-year deal with BMW to ride the GNCC series aboard their new 450 single cylinder cross-country machine. Yeah, I know what you're thinking. Why would anyone consider taking a well paid job with one of the world's leading motorcycle manufacturers to race in the States' sunshine? Especially when you could pay for the opportunity to race a season in GPs with no chance of earning a penny in prize money – even if you win!

Seriously though, GPs are still Gordon's dream but the stark reality is that GC is no longer the bright-eyed, bushy-tailed teenager of years gone by so it's time to plan for the future. Far from over the hill, Gordon has been given a great opportunity to fully utilise the motorcycle riding skills gifted to him.

"There are many well respected people involved in our plans," says Gordy. "Shane Watts and Scott Summers are people I will work with on a day-to-day basis while my friend Joel Smets is employed as both a development rider and ambassador for BMW. I am really pumped and excited about my future, it's a new challenge and I know I can do well over there."

His new season will kick off at Daytona in Florida come March 4 (while we freeze our nuts off back in Ireland) when the 13-round GNCC series gets under way. Chasing GNCC glory will take GC to the four corners of the States with a break during June and July because of the extreme heat so who knows just where he may turn up for a race!

Personally, I am delighted that one of the kindest, most sincere people in the game can move onto a new challenge and earn a living out of what he enjoys best – racing motorcycles.

Gordy was on hand at Tandragee Moto Park to continue his work with the top three finishers from the MRA/MCCNI and MCUI-sanctioned championships who received a personal invitation to join GC for one-to-one coaching.

The Red Bull MotoX Junior Assist Programme hosted around 30 young riders from all over Ireland for a two-day training course at Tandragee Moto Park this week. Introduced three years ago, the initiative's primary function is to develop new and local talent in the MX arena with mentoring coming from that man again, Gordon Crockard.

The MRA will have announced the race format for 2008 by the time you whittle your way through this month's Dirt Bike Rider. Having heard many of the proposed formats – none of which are ground-breaking on their own – I'm wondering why it is not possible to take the best ideas from each clubs' proposals.

Strangely enough, not one club proposed running the Ulster series with the same format that has lifted the Irish championship in stature over the past two seasons. With the main complaint of "not enough races" for riders on the day, running both MX1/MX2 Ulster

championships on the same day would free up eight weekends for three-race-per-class days. Less championships and more racing would seem the obvious solution to both coping with the ever-expanding MRA membership and giving more value to the club racer.

Now, speaking of value, I can see that the successful Mourne Cub hare scramble at Mount Panther has paved the way for GNCC-type racing to take hold in Ireland. Every rider that I spoke with thoroughly enjoyed the five-minute lap with experts riding for two hours and clubmen getting 90 minutes. Event organiser Arthur McMullen was delighted with the amount of entries which included enduro, motocross and even a few trials machines. Punters were rewarded with three times the amount of regular weekend bike time which did have some drawbacks going on the amount of riders complaining of severe monkey butt by the end.

"SO WHEN THE BIG HAND'S ON THE SEVEN IT'S WHAT O'CLOCK?"



A winter motocross series is in full swing in Cork with the Kevin O' Leary BMW-backed Munster MC attracting over 150 entries at round one. Motocross is becoming one of Co Cork's fastest-growing sports.

Possibly one of Ireland's brightest motocross prospects for the future, multi Ulster/Irish youth champion Andrew Reid is reported to have been lured to the Tarmac brigade. Andrew has been described by the likes of GC and Jonathan Rea as being one of the most tidy young riders in the UK youth MX scene. We wish him all the best for 2008...

GOMX365 have announced a three-rider Irish championship challenge for '08. Mike Sinton will try to go one better next year aboard a Russell's 450 Honda. Mike, who finished second this season, will also take in the Ulster MX2 series aboard a JRM-sponsored Honda 250F. The remainder of the team will be Southern-based. Ross Brown will race MX1/MX2 in both Irish and Ulster champs while 16-year-old Thomas O'Grady has been making waves in his first season in adult racing and finished a good fourth at the final Irish MX2 round at Tandragee.

The Dublin youngster is one of two southern centre youth riders who have made their presence felt after a brief appearance towards the end of the season. The other southern centre rider in question is Michael Mahoon who will race under the guidance of Ireland's newest KTM dealer – Graeme Vigors' VMX Motocross – in '08.

Stevie
dirtbikerider 19

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JONTY'S BOX

WORDS & PHOTO BY JONTY EDMUNDS

CROSSROADS!

WITH BMW ONBOARD, THE WEC REFUSING TO CROSS THE ATLANTIC AND KTM SIGNING TADDY BLAZUSIAK ON AN INDOOR-ONLY BASIS, 2008 COULD HERALD THE START OF MAJOR CHANGES FOR ENDUROS

AS SPORTING seasons go '07 was a pretty good one as far as enduro and off-road racing is concerned. Seemingly only yesterday followers of the World Enduro Championship series were debating what kind of form Juha Salminen would bring back to the WEC after his two-year domination of the US GNCC championship while at the same time asking what the world's premier enduro series would be like without Manxman David Knight. Now, with only a few daylight-starved weeks remaining until we officially wave goodbye to '07, the anticipation, questioning, hype and uncertainty surrounding '08 have already begun. But this much we do know...

Husaberg, the yellow and blue brand owned by KTM, will take a committed and meaningful step forward in '08. Stealing every other off-road manufacturers' thunder at the recent EICMA motorcycle show in Milan where they recently unveiled their radically new SOHC four-stroke motor with its forward facing cylinder, Husaberg will start '08 with much to smile about. A manufacturer that have been part of the WEC as long as the championship has been in existence, Husaberg have struggled to shed their 'agricultural' reputation. Loved by those that love them – and not given a second glance by those that don't – '08 might just be the year that people start to take Husaberg a whole lot more seriously.

The ninth year of this shiny new century of ours will also be an important one for BMW. Having taken their first tentative steps into the competitive world of the WEC this season, in '08 the Munich-based company will step up to the mark with a season-long commitment that will likely be the first of many. A company that have never done anything by half measures, while the new BMW team will lack the experience of some of the more established WEC squads – and despite campaigning machinery that has yet to prove itself at the highest level – BMW will have a serious impact on the international scene in '08. Will they win a world title? Unlikely. Will they be ready to win a world title in '09 come the end of next season? Highly likely.

So what of the WEC itself?

Well, with the two North American events removed from the calendar the 'Euro only' series won't be the global tour the FIM once announced they wanted it to be. With events in Poland and Wales replacing races in Canada and the States the eight-round championship will likely be three things – competitive, compact and pretty damn demanding as extreme tests will once again feature prominently in all events.

Guessing which riders will top each of the three senior and one junior class is anything but easy. But naming the half-dozen riders that will feature prominently at the head of the results isn't. Juha Salminen, Mika Ahola, Ivan Cervantes, Johnny Aubert, Samuli Aro, Simone Albergoni, Marko Tarkkala and Cristobal Guerrero will undoubtedly claim the lion's

share of podium places while the emergence of 'the next big thing' isn't expected any time soon.

The season just gone saw the emergence of a rider that will undoubtedly play a huge part in the future of the increasingly popular indoor and extreme enduro scene – Taddy Blazusiak. Certainly nothing new, as indoor and extreme events have been growing in popularity over the past four to five years, the fact that KTM have taken the bold step of signing a rider solely for the purpose of competing in indoor and extreme races – rather than just having the hugely talented Mr Knight already at their disposal – shows that enduro sport has reached an important junction. One that could well shape, or in part shape, the WEC's future.

With a six-event indoor series confirmed for the States for '08 and with the smart money being on the FIM upgrading the winter '07/'08 Indoor Enduro World Cup into an Indoor Enduro World Championship for '08/'09, it may not be long before some riders – either those unable to find the right WEC deal or those who simply perform better indoors –



FORMER WTC STAR TADDY BLAZUSIAK HAS SIGNED AN EXTREME/INDOOR-ONLY ENDURO DEAL WITH THE KTM FACTORY

stop chasing the world championship dream and start competing in events that reward them financially and are a whole lot easier to prepare for. Will indoor events generate interest in enduro sport that will spill over and boost the outdoor game? Or will the continued growth in popularity in indoor enduro events drive a rift between the roof-on/roof-off branches of the sport?

For the short term the coming months will provide some of the year's closest and likely most exciting racing action as Knighter, the '07 AMA Endurocross and GNCC champion, returns to the European indoor circuit in his bid to win a third championship this year – the Indoor Enduro World Cup. Go get 'em DK...



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CORNISH FASTY!

My name is Kieran, I am a 13-year-old male who races motocross for Cornwall Schoolboy Scramble Club – I ride a 2001 Yamaha YZ80 and love it! Recently CSSC had a presentation evening and I was surprised to see that Stephen Sword was presenting the trophies – he is a really nice guy and quite happily signed the beer mats for us kids and even the adults.

Cornwall is an awesome club and is run by some legends for us kids to have a good day in the mud and a laugh. We also have some really good riders, for example Darren Toy who just kicks arse all the time. I would like to say thank you to all the people who helped organise the CSSC presentation evening and all the people that help out at the races as well as my dad, step-dad and mum who always help me out.

Also another thing is that we are running out of tracks because of all the old people that were born old and don't want us kids to have fun. I mean it keeps us out of trouble on a Sunday and mostly any day of the week due to preparing the bike. I think that it's them annoying little minimotos that are ruining the sport of motocross for us because they ride them anywhere and everywhere! Don't you agree?

Kieran, Cornwall

If you're talking about the annoying little pull-start, two-stroke roadrace-style bikes and choppers that buzz around backstreets and playgrounds nationwide then yeah, we'd have to agree that minimotos are doing the image of motocycling no good at all.

However, don't confuse these lawless vandals with genuine minibike enthusiasts many of whom are doing their best to work with local councils to provide legal riding areas for their four-stroke minibikes. Good luck with the racing and we'll look out for your name at the front of the pack real soon...

CRISIS COMEBACK 1

Having read 'Goggle Crisis' on last month's Rant page I hope this is useful to DBR readers. Anyone who doesn't want to test out their Blue Peter skills with fishing wire for their lenses can get ones made with the same effect direct from Rip n Roll Systems or our dealers. Raised strip lenses in a range of colours are available for Oakley, Scott, Pro Grip, Spy and Rip n Roll goggles. Use with Rip n Roll film for best results. If that doesn't sort your roll-off system on a wet day, nothing will.

Natalie, Rip n Rollsville

CRISIS COMEBACK 2

Just a wee note regarding one of the letters in the latest DBR's Rant page. One of your readers – Chuck from Bury – was asking about how to stop his roll-off films from sticking on the lens and you directed him to Walker's World on the DBR website.

There is an excellent Josh Coppins' goggle feature there, (excellent as he uses Scott goggles!) but it is now a little out of date. The new Scott goggles, the model 89Xi, come with an anti-fog lens as standard and this has pegs for tear-offs which can be removed and the Scott roll-off canisters installed.

The complete 89Xi WFS (Works Film System) comes with an anti-stick lens fitted and this has tiny silicone dots on the lens which prevent the film from sticking – clever people at Scott, eh? There is also a mudflap to prevent water and dirt getting between the lens and film. Scott also make Holeshot tear-offs which go across the canisters over the film and get you through the first corner before you have to start using the film. Providing you use genuine Scott films and Lexan lenses you should have no trouble with the film sticking to the lens.

So there you are, another piece of blowing my own trumpet for Scott goggles – perhaps they should have changed the name to 'Scot' goggles! All the best...

Bert, Lancaster (okay, Scotland)

If the UK importer of Scott products wasn't quite so tight we're sure he'd have furnished us with a pair of anti-stick 89Xi WFS goggles to test for ourselves. That way we wouldn't have to resort to whipping out the fishing line, eh Bert?

FAN MAIL!

I just thought I would write to you to say how much of a good job you are doing. I really enjoyed the Weston Beach Race article in the December issue, in fact the photo spread that you have got over a double page features Brad Perrett and also my brother's mate – he is on the Honda CRF 250 number 512 with a pink helmet so that he would be spotted and it looks like it worked. He was very happy that he was in your magazine. I currently subscribe to DBR and I advise everyone to consider subscribing as it is on time every month without fail. My renewal is in the post ready for next year.

Michael, Wales

CAMEL FOE?

I've just started getting into off-road riding and competing in the odd hare and hound race but keep on getting a bit dehydrated after a couple of hours which isn't doing me any good. The other weekend I saw a guy who had a drinking straw coming out of a nap sack type thing so I asked him what it was and he told me it was a camel hump hydro pack or something. Do I need one and can you advise me on the best one to buy?

Charles, Lancashire

There are a bunch of high quality hydro packs – also known as camelbacks because the Camelbak company were the first major brand to produce them similar to why vacuum cleaners are now commonly called Hoovers – available from a whole host of sources including your local outdoor store and specialist dirt bike dealer. Your best bet is to try a bunch on and see what feels comfiest for your type of body shape. Good luck, Chuck!

AMERICAN DREAM!

I really want to take advantage of the weak dollar and take in a couple of rounds of next year's AMA supercross series in the New Year. Do you know where I can buy tickets for the Anaheim rounds from in advance?

Great mag, keep up the great work!

Phil, Dorset

Hi Phil, if you head online to any of the major ticket sales websites – ticketzoom.com, frontrowtickets.com or ticketsmyway.com – you'll find what you need. Have a great trip!





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Words by **TONY MARSHALL** Photos by **REDEYE**

Suzuki's radically reworked 450 is a huge improvement on their '07 model



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OFF ROAD

KTM

Since Suzuki's RM-Z 450 was launched to the public in 2005 they've not exactly flown from showroom floors despite the fine job Suzuki's pro racers – think Carmichael, Strijbos, Ramon, Tedesco et al – have done to show how potent a machine they can be in the right hands. Hampered by bus-like styling and handling traits as well as an engine that seemed to deliver all of its power in one short, sharp hit, the old RM-Z was far from being the best 450 on the market and everyone knew it.

Thankfully for 2008 the Suzuki 450 is an all-new beast. A new frame, new styling, an abundance of tweaks and tickles as well as the fitment of an extra cog in the now five-speed gearbox all go a long way to help the rebirth of the yellow beast. The big thing with the 2008 RM-Z is the battery-less Electronic Fuel Injection (EFI) system which is a first for any major motocross bike manufacturer. The system self-adjusts, compensating for temperature and altitude meaning there's no need to worry about jetting – bonus!

Another bonus to having the EFI system fitted is the need for an



aluminium fuel tank. There's no denying all tanks look trick but the RM-Z's tiny 6.4 litre unit is functional too. Pressurized when the bike is running, the tank holds a motocross specific Keihin fuel pump that's mounted to the lower portion of the aluminium cell. Because fuel won't flow when the bike is not running there's no need for a fuel tap – giving riders one less thing to check repeatedly when the 15-second board is shown.

I've already mentioned that the system requires no battery, so how does it work? The Suzuki technicians tell me the system uses a single phase starting system – when the bike hasn't been used for a while the first kick charges a capacitor, while the second kick should start the bike in the traditional manner. During a race or riding session the capacitor is constantly recharged so if you stop, crash or stall the motor it'll fire right back up – well, right back up by hot four-stroke standards anyway.

As well as the all-new EFI system the rest of the motor is heavily breathed upon too. The head has a redesigned combustion chamber, revised port angles and cam timing which should increase gas flow efficiency and low-to-mid range throttle response while a heavier flywheel produces an overall smoother power delivery.

The '08 RM-Z's all-new frame and bodywork look a lot less agricultural and much more racier than ever before. Slimmer, lighter and more rigid – the new chassis should make for a much more agile handling machine. The slimmer chassis also helps rider manoeuvrability which means

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SPECIFICATIONS

RM-Z 450 >>>

Capacity:	449cc
Bore and stroke:	96mm x 62.1mm
Transmission:	Five-speed
Fuel system:	Keihin FI 43mm
Front suspension:	Showa 47mm fork
Rear suspension:	Showa
Wheelbase:	1480mm
Seat height:	955mm
Dry weight:	101.5kg





more control. Other newness includes wavy style brake discs, a refined gripper seat cover, a right-hand side hot start lever, footpegs, suspension tweaks and a gold-coloured chain.

On the track the riding position feels right, the bars feel good, the seating position is good and everything feels like it's in the right place. That said I still felt that the front end didn't feel so stable. Coming into turns I felt like the forks were sitting too high in the stroke and the bike didn't want to turn in. Even when I softened off the compression clickers it didn't seem to help but I'm sure one of the reputable suspension tuners who advertise in DBR could get a suitable set-up for the RM-Z so don't despair if you have trouble setting up your RM-Z.

The rear suspension works well, there's no kicking from the rear and I feel that it works pretty much perfectly with the rear soaking up anything I or the track could throw at it in all situations – on the gas out of corners, landing from jumps and braking into corners, everywhere!

The brakes on the RM-Z are solid performers too offering a good progressive feel which is pretty much the norm for Nissin units. The wavy style discs look cool too.

The way the motor delivers its power is much better than that of previous models. For starters the bike feels so much more responsive – it runs a treat – but it's the overall spread of power on the new bike which is much wider and makes the bike easier to ride. It's possible to come out of a corner in completely the wrong gear and the motor will make it work. There's power everywhere – top, middle or bottom. In my opinion that's what making a good 450 is all about – creating strong, smooth power and that's what Suzuki have done.

In the past I've felt that the four-speed gearbox has really held this bike back – I often felt like I was in top gear before I'd even got out of the turn – and the new five-speeder really transforms this bike on the track. It shifts smoothly and the gearing ratios in the five-speed box feel so much better than the old four gear set-up.

Overall I'd say that the 2008 RM-Z is infinitely better than the '07 and older models. It looks better, rides better and is a much more desirable bike to own.



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Thorpe and Geboers go bar-to-bar
– a familiar sight throughout the
1980s – at Sittendorf in '86

HERO WORSHIP!

The most successful British motocrosser ever, three-time world 500cc champ Dave Thorpe picked up a fourth world crown in 2007 – and a whole load of new fans...

Words by JON O'CONNELL Photos by NICK HASKELL



1986 saw Thorpe retain his 500cc world championship after an epic year-long battle with Belgian friend and foe Andre Malherbe



HERO RSHIP!



Despite a broken arm putting an end to his world championship hopes Dave still lifted plenty of silverware in '87



Dave gives it beans in '83 – his first year as a factory Honda racer

Mention the '80s to any Brit that followed motocross back in the day and be prepared for them to go misty-eyed at the memories. It's often referred to as the golden era of motocross – and for good reason. It produced some epic racing between the likes of Kurt Nicoll, Andre Malherbe, Georges Jobe, Eric Geboers and – of course – Britain's favourite motocross son Dave Thorpe.

With the '85, '86 and '89 world 500cc MX championships to his name nobody could have blamed DT if he'd swapped his boots for slippers and enjoyed a well-earned retirement. But with a work ethic that puts many pro riders half his age to shame, 18 years after his last world crown the 44-year-old grabbed world title #4 at an emotionally-charged Donington Park GP.

At the age of 15, football as well as motocross played a big part of his life and he had trials with QPR. At the same time Honda offered him his first pro contract. Honda wanted him to run the 250cc Red Rocket in the AMCA series with an offer of £1000 a month for 12 months. Unsurprisingly that was the end of the football!

At the end of the 12 months Honda wanted DT to remain with the AMCA series but DT and his dad Keith wanted to move up to the ACU British championship. He was approached by his now long time friend Alec Wright who signed him up to ride in both the British championship support series and under 18 championship for Kawasaki in 1979.

Things went well until a broken leg in May 1980 brought his season to a premature close. After a lay off of 13 months he competed in a few races and one GP at the season end before getting his head down and putting in a solid winter of training in preparation for a full assault on the 500cc class in 1982. After race wins at Farleigh Castle and Sittendorf he finished sixth in his rookie year.

Thorpey then got a call from Honda who arranged a meeting with Gerald Davidson and Honda's people from Japan. They offered him a deal that he pretty much couldn't turn down. Alec Wright didn't stand in his way. Honda's infrastructure and resources were second-to-none at the time and DT, with his dad Keith as mechanic, signed for 1983 and '84.

After testing the new water-cooled bike in the US desert with Graham Noyce and Malherbe it didn't take Dave long to realise that the new bike didn't really suit him. He just couldn't adjust to it and this became obvious in his results which didn't go well throughout the series.

At the last race of the '83 season, St Anthony's in Holland, Honda's big boss from Japan was watching so the pressure was on to pull something out of the bag. Unfortunately, the exact opposite happened. Feeling totally exhausted, Thorpe's results were poor at best and to rub salt into Honda's wounds Hakan Carlqvist clinched the title for Yamaha. By the time DT was on the ferry home he was covered in spots and it transpired that he'd been coming down with chickenpox. It was no consolation though.

"Honda weren't looking for excuses," remembers Dave with a shrug, "they were there to win not make up the numbers."

After a season of feeling uncomfortable

on the bike and only finishing fifth in the championship, Thorpe was far from happy. "Truth be known if I hadn't been under contract for '84 I would have switched teams."

Luckily for him – and his fans – he was under contract and would be staying at Honda for the '84 season at the very least. He trained ferociously during the winter and truly found himself in terms of fitness and strength and once he got back on the bike things started to fall into place.

The 1984 season was a good one with his first race win for Honda in Sweden and then double wins towards the end of the year at Hawkstone, Belgium and Italy. With Andre Malherbe taking the title and Thorpey finishing third in front of the big bosses, Honda were happy enough to offer another two-year contract for the '85 and '86 seasons.

This period saw some truly fantastic racing and DT was at his prime. He was well respected by his fellow riders and was seen as someone with a tremendous work ethic, a true athlete due to his fitness regime and as somebody with the emotional dedication to be the best rider out there.

His rivals at the time would use him as added motivation. "It was simple," reckoned Eric Geboers, "beat Thorpe and you are champion!"

But try as they might nobody could better him over a season and Thorpe won the 500cc title in '85 and '86. Unsurprisingly, Honda came good with another two-year contract.

And 1987 was looking good for a third consecutive title until a broken arm put paid to it and Georges Jobe took over the 500 crown. Never one to sit back and mope, DT simply put all his energy into training for the next season and hopefully restoring normal order to the class!

The following year saw a fantastic season-long battle between Thorpe and former 125 and 250 champ Geboers which looked to be going down to the wire. After a double win at Hawkstone – which sand-specialist Geboers was banking on winning – things were looking good for DT. Unfortunately, injury would again rob Thorpe of the title. A practice crash the next weekend in Holland left him with a broken collarbone and pretty much handed the title to Geboers.

But DT fired back in '89 to win this third world title and was offered a new contract. For reasons best known to them, Honda insisted that DT's dad would not be able to wrench for him and he would have to have a new mechanic. Unbeknown to Honda, Kawasaki had put an offer to Thorpe and when, after several meetings, Honda still wouldn't budge on allowing his dad to continue working for him Thorpe informed them that he would sign for Kawasaki for 1990. This caught the men from Honda on the back foot and after a 10-minute talk they said that it would be okay for his dad to continue with him after all.

Feeling let down by Honda after such a long and successful partnership with them, DT refused their offer and signed a two-year deal with the greens.

"In hindsight looking back now I would have probably had a better chance to win some more titles if I'd stayed with Honda," admits Dave, "because while the Kawasaki was an incredible bike and they worked really hard it was still a prototype bike."

This was never more in evidence than the first GP of '90 at Valkenswaard. ▶

Worried that the bike would run out of fuel in the deep sand, Kawasaki welded a 'box' to the top of the fuel tank to increase its capacity. The downside of the box was that it mangled Thorpe's nuts leaving him needing stitches!

After this initial baptism of fire the season ended with a couple of wins and fifth overall in the championships. Then, in an ironic twist, Kawasaki refused to renew Keith's contract for the '91 season meaning DT would have a new mechanic whether he liked it or not. Cue wry smiles at Honda!

At the first round of 1991 in Switzerland the Kawasaki threw a rod as Thorpe jumped a big double, throwing him over the bars and dislocating his shoulder. This took 12 weeks to recover from and Kawasaki assured him the bike problem was solved. Unfortunately, the next time he rode it – at the French GP – the bike did it again. Luckily he caught it on the clutch and managed to save it but the incident dealt a killer blow to his confidence and he ended the season in a disappointing seventh.

If '91 was a disappointment then '92 was a disaster. Signed by the Italian Cinti team to ride Hondas fitted with his factory engines, things started to go wrong before the season even started when he cut off the tip of his finger in a practice crash. The team then didn't pay his wages and Thorpe ended up taking them to court. He won the case but the team declared itself bankrupt, leaving him well and truly out of pocket.

The following year was to be Thorpe's last season on the GP circuit in a privateer effort funded by himself and with his dad as mechanic. "I always wanted to go into retirement knowing that I couldn't do it anymore, knowing that I could no longer win," explains Dave. "That whatever it was that made you special was gone."

True to his word, at the end of '93 he pulled the curtain down on a fantastic career but moving too far away from motocross was never an option. In '94 as well as running his own MX schools he was appointed as manager of the British des Nations team. And with riders Kurt Nicoll, Paul Malin and Rob Herring they did the unthinkable and beat the Americans to take the Peter Chamberlain Trophy.

After taking some time away in '95, Thorpe formed the CAT Honda team which he ran from '96 to the end of 2000. The team was a 125cc only effort and through the years had the likes of Mike Brown, Stephen Sword, Jamie Dobb and Carl Nunn riding for him. The team enjoyed its fair share of success with several GP wins and a British title courtesy of Mike Brown.

But although he liked working with some of the riders and seeing their success, it wasn't something that he really enjoyed doing. "When you hired some of the riders you were the best thing since sliced bread but when they left you were the worst person on the planet!"

Thorpe also found it difficult to work with riders who didn't share the same work ethic and commitment that he'd had when he was riding. "If things weren't working out I'd always look within, whereas some riders would never look in but always look out."

Now living in a quiet corner of Devon with his wife Gail and small menagerie of animals, Thorpe's life has slowed

considerably from his racing days. Walking into his home you'd have little or no idea that motorcycles have played any part of his life, the three world championship diplomas hanging in his small office the only clue to his glittering career.

DT now spends his time running the occasional MX school as well as handling the physical and mental training of a handful of pro Brit boys during the off-season. "Some of the boys need reassurance of their own abilities. A lot of it is in your mind. It's not your good days that win you the championship, it's how you deal with the bad days."

His own fitness level is still extraordinary and most of his hobbies revolve around exertion. By his own admission he isn't keen on team sports but plays football as well as enjoying golf, swimming, badminton, squash, cycling and running. He now has more time for holidays and that was the original plan for Namur in '07 – until Eric Geboers called asking him to ride in the inaugural FIM world vet's championship.

The weekend didn't start well when Thorpe's van was stolen on the Friday night along with all of his kit and his friend's bike. Luckily, DT's bike was already at the circuit. CAS Honda stepped in and lent him a spare set of Ken De Dycker's kit while several of the other teams rallied round with fuel and spares. Even with this far from ideal start Thorpe felt right at home on the famous circuit and finished the first race second behind Jan Blankaert.

"To be honest I wasn't really nervous at Namur, probably because I'd ridden there quite often before. I'd actually done no training at all for it."

The second race was on the Sunday morning and Thorpe put his standard CRF450 on the top of the box, leaving the Citadel with the points lead. The series would be decided a few weeks later at Donington Park's British GP.

"I was very nervous at Donington, not of racing but of the track. I was very nervous of the jumps, that if I didn't get them right I wouldn't win – which was very important to me – and also that it was going to hurt! In fact I went to the Tonymoto track for a day just to practice the jumps."

The practice paid off and it looked like he was going to lead from start to finish until Blankaert snatched the lead with only a couple of turns to go in race one. Race two and nobody was going to spoil Thorpe's day. Grabbing the lead immediately, nobody came close and victory along with world championship #4 was in the bag. Donington erupted!

When asked if he would have given Thorpe a run for his money, former rival Kurt Nicoll grinned. "I don't do Seniors – I can't accept I'm old enough! I have no idea how fast David is but probably I would get second like normal!"

The good news for British MX fans is that Thorpe will definitely be defending his #1 plate next year. A deal has already been struck with Honda, Oakley goggles, UFO clothing and 661 helmets and boots. The Seniors series will also be gaining an extra round so will visit Bellpuig, Foxhill and Namur.

After managing to win the '07 series with only a week's notice, who would bet against DT – fully-prepped and firing on all cylinders – taking his fifth world title in 2008?



Years before the Bubba Scrub came the Thorpey Throw



Farleigh Castle later proved to be a popular hunting ground for Thorpe pictured here in '82





FOND FAREWELL!

THE KXF GETS ONE LAST RUN OUT BEFORE WINTER TAKES ITS GRIP...

Words by Sully Photos by still-mx.co.uk

IT'S BEEN a while since our last long-term update but to be honest after the KX450F was given its mid-season makeover and tune-up I haven't had time to hit the track to pull any sweet skids or wicked wheelies on the much refined beast. But while my bad self may have been out of action the bike hasn't been and it spent much of its summer with ex-British 125 champ and GP runner and current coach extraordinaire Mr Greg Hanson.

Greg had plans to win the Senior class of the Veterans world championship at the Donington GP on our weapon of choice but that all went awry when the FIM wouldn't accept Greg's entry as it was a tad on the tardy side. Bummer. With the GP appearance out of the window but Greg still super-pumped to bang some plastic we lined him up with a ride at the last round of the Maxxis British championship at Pontrilas – then he

bailed off his own YZ125 at a round of the DEP two-stroke series at Culham a couple of weeks before. Not bouncing quite as well as he did 20 years ago, Greg was too sore to ride the British championship round and that was the end of that.

Greg did spend an hour or so practising for Donington at Winchester super venue Tonymoto and from what I can gather the fast 41-year-old was quite impressed with – and hellishly fast on – the magazine machine after making a few small adjustments (Greg prefers to run full-waffle soft compound Renthal grips and an old-school lever set-up). While the bike was in Greg's care RG3 London carried out some suspension mods to set it up for Greg's weight (that'll be about five stone) and style of riding (ragged, ha ha!).

After picking the bike up from Greg's gaff my first and sadly last ride out on it was to be at

Marshfield on a chilled autumn day of riding with my mates Matt and Dale from Sixsixone, Myles the pirate, the captain of the good ship Dingmaster – that's Neil Carroll who ironically drives the most dinged up camper I ever did see – and some Molson Kawasaki riding mush called Tom Church or something...

Some overnight rain made conditions for the last ride pretty much as good as they could be – it was gonna be the perfect send off for the almost perfect magazine machine. After doing a couple of laps to warm up I started to up the pace a little, getting a feel for the bike and the re-dialled RG3 suspension. While the work was quite specific to Greg's riding style and weight an improvement in ride was still noticeable – especially at the rear – with the bike feeling more positive coming into and through the turns. Everything else felt exactly as it had done



It's an emotional day at Marshfield as Suttty turns the wheels on his magazine machine for the last time before it's returned to sender

previously and it was reassuringly comforting to be back on the KXF – especially at Marshfield where I'd raced earlier in the year with the Corsham SSC at their 40th Anniversary Masters of Motocross meeting.

Having had a handful of long-term test bikes in the past few years – a KXF250, CR250 and CRF450 – I've figured out what works well and most definitely have my favourite products. My opinion on Renthal bits and particularly Windham bend Twinwalls and Kevlar grips has been stated many times before – in my opinion they're pretty much perfect which is why more often than not you'll see them fitted to my bike. Other Renthal products on the KXF included the Twinring sprocket and R-3 o-ring

chain – both totally stress-free, rock solid performers.

I've also used a Dirt Tricks Ironman sprocket on my spare wheel. The Ironman is the hardest wearing sprocket in the known universe and it even comes with a one-year warranty! Check out www.baselinerracing.com for more details on this awesome product which has barely been scratched by the limited use I've chucked at it this year.

Baseline also supplied a TM Designworks chain guide for the KXF. The flexible chain guide will withstand huge impacts without breaking or derailing the chain in even the most extreme of conditions. While fitting one of these super-trick guides may be overkill for most motocross tracks, the chain >>

CHEERS GUYS...

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The Meat by name, meaty by nature!

guides are invaluable for off-road racers – Wakker used one at this year's Romaniacs and was probably the only rider who didn't have to remount his chain during the five-day epic event.

Another tough product I fitted to the KXF was a set of RG3 triple clamps which in my opinion are the best in the world and have performed flawlessly throughout this year's testing schedule. The dual post bar mounts are super-strong and stop the clamps twisting in a crash but I never managed to test just how good they are in that department – I'm obviously mellowing out in my old age.

After successfully testing a pair of Multitek wheels on last year's CRF, we opted to try some Haan hubs laced to Excel rims courtesy of Roland Shaw at Hardcore

Racing (www.hardcoreracing.co.uk). The Dutch-built wheels – also used by Molson Kawasaki, Sarholz KTM and Team GKPR riders among others – are quality kit and come in an array of colour combinations. Sweet!

A DEP S7 exhaust was fitted and this helped transform the way the bike delivered its power. Super-smooth and super-quiet, the S7 was a great addition and looked pretty trick too coming in matt black with a carbon end cap.

The N-Style Pro Circuit/Monster Energy team graphics fitted to Polisport plastics also looked great and lasted well too with the custom printed backgrounds helping finish off the look in an AMA-pro stylee. All in all I was pretty happy with the way the KXF looked – almost as sweet as it rode.



WIN WIN WIN!

ELECTRIC MX-1 GOGGLES >>

We tested 'em earlier in the year and found the Electric MX-1s to be a reet comfortable pair of MX-specific, non-fogging eye protectors and now we're hooking up with the guys at coffinoncake.com to offer one lucky reader the chance to own a pair of their very own.

All you have to do to win is answer this simple question. Which of the following Electric athletes won X-Games gold in 2007?

- Is it:
A) Kyle Loza
B) Jolene Van Jugt
C) Marc Fischer
D) Derek Garland

When you've figured out the answer send it to us along with your name, address and a daytime telephone number on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope to Electric Comp, DBR Magazine, 12 Victoria Street, Morecambe, Lancashire LA4 4AG. The first randomly drawn correct answer after the closing date of January 10 will win a pair of Electric MX-1 goggles. You can also enter online at www.dirtbikerider.com



DBR TESTED

NO TOIL BIODEGRADABLE FILTER PRODUCTS >>

There's no denying that servicing air filters is a pretty darn crappy job. Washing, oiling and fitting filters is a time consuming chore that's about as popular a job to do on your dirt scooter as greasing the suspension linkage. However, unlike linkage servicing which there is no quick or easy way to do properly, there is a way of cutting down the time you spend servicing your bike's foam air filter.

America is the home of laziness with drive thru this, instant that and kwik the other so it's no surprise that the company behind the easy way of filter servicing is American. No-Toil is a California-based foam filter and treatment fluid company whose range of biodegradable products can be cleaned in your washing machine.

Before we go any further I must stress that before you start dumping all your filters in the washer/dryer if you've ever used solvent-based products on your filter it's a bad, bad idea to chuck 'em in the washer. Believe me, I've done it before and it makes your washer stink – so don't do it.

However, if you're lazy and smart, by buying a new No-Toil filter and a filter treatment kit from a Madison dealer – check www.ultimatepursuits.co.uk to find your local one – you too can do your filters in the washing machine without running the risk of annoying your missus, mum or flat mate. No matter what, you've gotta use the No-Toil products exclusively. There are other quality biodegradable products out there – Twin Air and Motorex are two that spring to mind – but I can't guarantee it's a good idea to wash 'em in your Hotpoint or Zanussi.

Applying the No-Toil filter oil is done in the traditional way – saturate your clean, dry filter with oil then squeeze out the excess. Once you've done that let the filter stand for 15 minutes to let the alcohol-based carrying fluid evaporate before greasing the rim with No-Toil biodegradable grease and fitting it in your bike.

When your filter is suitably used and you've washed your dirt scooter clean whip out your filter, grab the No-Toil cleaner and head to your kitchen. Empty out your socks and thongs and chuck your filter or filters in the drum. Now put half-a-cup of No-Toil filter cleaner and half-a-cup of laundry detergent in the correct place then set the machine to a warm water setting and go get yourself a cuppa before air drying the suckers on the line.

I was pleasantly surprised just how clean the filters were after being machine washed and there were no nasty traces left in the washer so it's something I'd definitely consider doing with next year's long-term test-bike filters.



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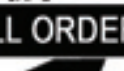
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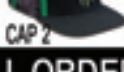
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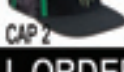
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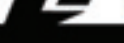
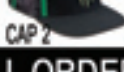
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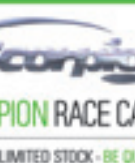
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KANE SUGAR!

Her style's so super-sweet even Stefan Everts is tipping her as a future world champ but can Natalie Kane go all the way to the top?

Words and photos by ALEX HODGKINSON



© Magnus Andersson

Natalie Kane came out swinging at Lierop and showed she's got what it takes to be a Women's World Cup contender



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Natalie Kane only turned 16 last month but no lesser personality than record champ Stefan Everts reckons the 5ft 4ins bundle of dynamite from Banbridge, 20 miles from Belfast, is poised to become Ireland's first ever motocross world champion!

There can be no doubt that the women's world series, upgraded next summer to full world championship status, has been THE success story of the last couple of seasons. The racing at the sharp end is as good as you will find anywhere and the girls' presence has even taught the boys a few manners!

So how come an Ulster teenage girl got interested in what was, until so recently, a playground for men and boys? "Most of my family have ridden motocross. My mum Loretta and my dad Gabriel both rode, in fact that's where they met. They weren't that good – well dad was all right – but mum just did it for fun. They stopped racing when my sister was born."

That didn't stop the family going to the races of course and it was only a couple of years before Kanes were chasing round fields on bikes again. "I had a quad when I was three for riding round the paddock and when I was five I got a PW50. My sister raced too until she had to move onto the small wheel 85. She just rode round for fun and didn't do the jumps so she stopped racing because she was afraid of getting landed on."

But there was never any chance of Natalie 'just riding round' as the lads she has beaten through her years in the youth division will testify!

"We don't have a girls-only class in Ulster, there's just not enough of us, so you have to race with the boys. That's tougher so you have to try that wee bit harder. Every year a few more girls start racing in Ulster. There's a load on the wee 50s but most of them fade away when they come to the 125s. As you get older the competition with the boys gets harder and most of the girls lose interest then."

Not a problem for Natalie who has won Ulster and Irish championships on the 65s and the 80s and even left her mark in the British youth ranks. "I did the BYMX in the 65s. I've also done the All Girls championships and I've won every year on 85s except two years ago when I missed the start of my race after they changed the order after practice and nobody told us."

So how do the boys react to getting beaten by a girl? "We've raced together from the very start so most of them don't try to take advantage. It's not like they see the hair hanging out of the back of my helmet and go straight for me. They have respect for me and treat me as an equal. But there are some boys when you're practising, when they see that you're a girl, they will just go straight for you and try to take you out – some of them will do everything because they don't want it to be said that they've been beaten by a girl, even in practice."

But the days of youth racing for the Kanes ended last summer as Natalie, then 15, decided she wanted to race the Women's World Cup. "Once I raced the MX2 bike I couldn't go back to 85s but I wanted to race the world cup."

And on her series debut at Uddevalla in Sweden Natalie was already running the pace of the leaders, a feat even more remarkable given it was the first time she had ever raced a 250F – and a borrowed one at that!

It wasn't the first time she'd rolled up at a meeting with a two-fiddy four-popper but a problem with her shoulder meant she didn't actually make it to the point-paying races.

"I didn't get past practice. It actually started a year-and-a-half ago when the suspension bust going to the take-off of a jump at Ballykelly and spun me off. Because I got knocked out and was

complaining of a sore neck they never realised that my shoulder had been dislocated and had gone back in itself.

"But it didn't go in right and had trapped a nerve. It felt funny when you touched it but it was a year later when I was in France for the MX Masters kids that we first realised the problem. A stone hit my shoulder and it went dead. The doctors found the nerve damage and muscle decay. The nerve's dead now and I just have to try to build the other muscles up around it so I've been doing a lot of exercise.

"It's coming better gradually but it's taking time. At first I could only do 10 minutes and my shoulder would go dead and I couldn't feel the throttle. That's what happened in Sweden. I couldn't feel the throttle and shot off the track but now I'm doing some good exercises and it's coming good."

The shoulder injury has restricted Natalie to just a handful of races throughout 2007. "I raced once in March but I only did the first race and it popped out again so when the first round of the

World Cup in Germany came around I had to watch. It was good to watch the other girls – I could see where you could get time up, see where they do something wrong that can be to my advantage. But it's even better to watch the boys to see where you can get faster! It wasn't until two days before we set off for Sweden that I got to ride for the first time since March."

Incredibly, Natalie was setting top three times all day on the Saturday at Uddevalla. "Yes, I led first practice until the last lap and had the speed all weekend. The first three laps I was right there but then my shoulder kept going dead."

And then came the next setback. "In qualifying the back wheel slid out when I landed off the step-up and high-sided me off. I landed on my left side but when I got home the doctor said that I'd shocked the nerve. That's why, after I had over-jumped in the first race, I had to pull off the second race. I was afraid of getting hurt so I just pulled in on the first lap.

"My shoulder was sore and my mum and dad didn't want me to ride again that day but I



It's not like the boys think you're a girl because you're a girl. They have respect for me and treat me as an equal. But there are some boys when you're practising, when they see that you're a girl, they will just go straight for you and try to take you out – some of them will do everything because they don't want it to be said that they've been beaten by a girl, even in practice."



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wanted to try. Then on the first lap in the sweeper before the tabletop the track was wet, I just slid into it and tweaked my shoulder again. I had no feeling and was afraid of getting hurt. I had to stop then."

Assistance to this point had come from Holeshot Moto-X but before the world cup finale at Lierop the Motovision boys had sat up and taken notice. And, with Jake Nicholls out of action for the rest of the year, they only needed to change one digit on each plate from Jake's 45 to Natalie's 44.

"I'll holeshot at least one moto," promised Natalie before racing and she was true to her word. But, more than that, the Irish lass showed that lack of bike time was not going to slow her and the fact she was just two seconds off Kathi Prumm underlined that she had arrived on the world stage.

"I'll probably do the main British youth series next year – I'll be the only girl doing it. And then in 2009 I want to do the adult championships. And next year I want to try to win the world championship. I'm convinced I can do it. Then in a few years time, when I get a bit stronger, hopefully try to qualify for a man's GP!

"And after that maybe America. I've been there two years ago to race in the amateurs. We were supposed to go out at the end of this year but I think it will be better just to stay and practice ready for next year."

Stefan Everts predicts a bright future for the Irish teenager



KANE SLICED



Team Kane is very much a family affair

STEFAN SAYS

Future world champ?

"She is a very good rider. She was riding the 250 for the very first time when she came to my training camp in Spain last winter but she looked like she had ridden it for a long time.

"Her desire is incredible, also her style on the bike is very good. She has a good feeling for the bike but she needs to get her shoulder sorted out, to get it strong enough.

"She's been riding too soon every time and when she crashes she puts herself back. Her first priority has to be to get her shoulder sorted out, until she does she's just going to keep hurting it.

"But if she does that she will get very good in the future and, in my opinion, she can be world champion one day."

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Pulling together

"Holeshot Moto-X give me Smith goggles and stuff for the bike but after that my parents have to get the money however they can. Mum's a cook and dad's a lorry driver but for the last few weeks no-one's been working so I can go out practising. Every weekend there's a race back home in Ulster but the tracks aren't very good – all stony and stuff – so I've been spending my time practising instead. I don't want another rock on my shoulder.

"You can't practice at Desertmartin or Ballykelly but there's one sand track that you're allowed to go to on Tuesdays, Thursdays and at the weekends but there's not many jumps – it's just sand. And then I have a wee hardpack track of my own, just a small patch of land which I rent but it's not very good. But the sand at

home is like hardpack compared to Lierop.

"My cousin Sean does the British and we go practising together. He's actually a bit faster than me but I will try to catch him and he tries to get away so that pulls me on. Other than that I just have my dad telling me what to do and then it's just me wanting to do it, to get better and practising every day.

"Gordon Crockard was obviously a role model. I was at Genk with my family the year he won it. And now Motovision has taken me on and can hopefully take me to the GPs next year. That's what I really want.

"I've already left school. Taking off so many days it was getting my mum into trouble. Basically I just ride motocross – practising and racing. I'm not worried about what comes after, I'll just take it as it comes."



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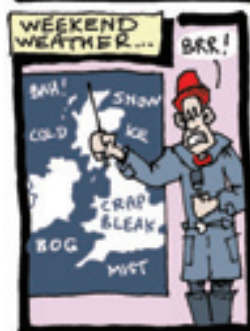
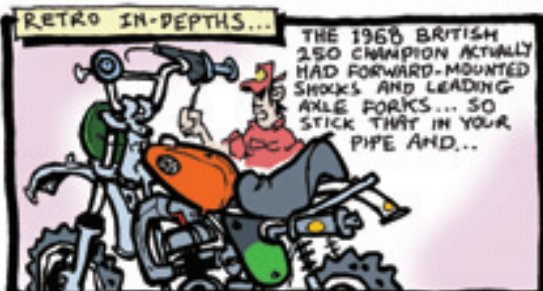
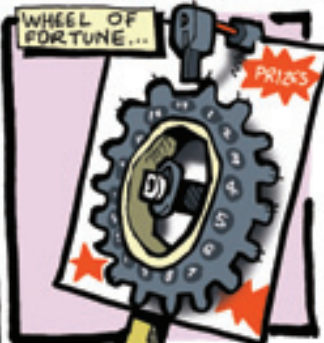
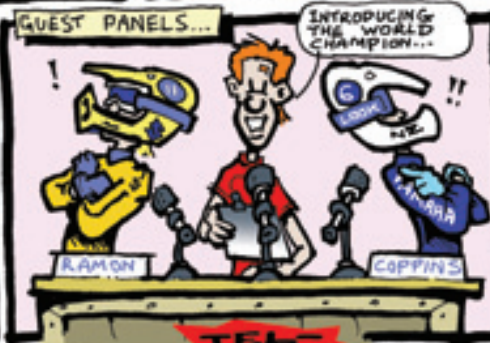
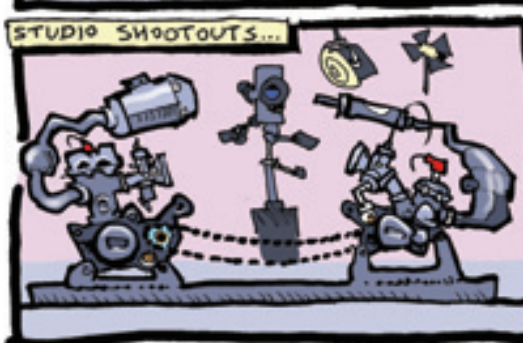
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*Knighter looks back for
Taddy Blazusiak but the
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The dream team (and Walker)...

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Words by GEOFF WALKER Photos by JONTY EDMUNDS

"Hey Spode! What happened?" I'm sat outside the KTM big rig – just after the finish of the surreal and ground-breaking event that is the Las Vegas Maxxis Endurocross – and I'm feeling a little blown away by it all.

It's always been a dream of mine to go to America to race but I never thought it would happen until the invitation came from Eric Perronard to come to Las Vegas to race the Maxxis Endurocross. Initially I didn't take the invite too seriously as I was still on the come down from the Romaniacs trip but I came to the decision that if Eric thought I deserved a spot in the line-up then who was I to argue?

To cut a long story short, Shaun Sisterson at KTM UK organised a bike with Kurt Nicoll at KTM North America and there it was, sorted and no way to back out. The entry was there and the #140 KP Equipe DBR KTM would be taking to the track in Vegas...gulp!

Myself and Spodealicious (team entertainer and mechanic) travelled to America a week before the event to acclimatise and hopefully do some riding on the KTM 250 XC. The XC bikes are available in America as a lighter version of the EXC as they don't run with lights in any of the GNCC, WORCS or desert races as a general rule. The XC (cross country) is basically a mellow motocross bike. Light, mellow and easy to ride – a bit like Spode actually! – and just the order for endurocross.

We picked the bike up from KTM in Southern California on Monday morning and hooked up with Knighter and his new spannerman Scotty. All the crew at KTM were a great help and Spode was full factory as he pimped the bike in the workshops. The DEP pipe was fitted and the Racetech handguards were popped on before we went riding in the afternoon. Knighter knew of some ground close to the KTM HQ so we went off in the baking sunshine for a little shakedown ride. The man is a machine and within 10 minutes he had made up a short track with rocks, jumps, tight turns and concrete drainpipes to hop over. The bike felt good straight away and some clicker tuning and height setting was all that was required to get going.

Tuesday saw us head off in convoy to Kyle Redmond's ranch around 60 miles from Los Angeles to ride the endurocross track in his backyard. The track was superb as it was filled with rocks, logs, sand, a car and more sand, rocks and logs. What a day! Boiling hot, at altitude and riding with Knighter, Geoff Aaron (10 times USA trials champ), Damon Huffman (supercross legend) and Redmond. I was pinching myself and trying to concentrate on doing laps to prepare for the weekend. It was at this point that I realised there was no going back. I would be turning out in Vegas and there was going to be absolutely nowhere to hide.

With some encouragement from Knighter and Spode my riding was improving and the bike was getting better by the click and tweek. At the end of the day I had managed a couple of motos on the intense track and felt pretty pleased with myself. Spode was happy with the bike and we had some video footage to check at the hotel that night.

The plan was to ride one more morning before heading back to Vegas for the event and meet Suttly but plans go wrong and cock-up #1 reared its ugly head when the Dawg suffered some

serious brain-fade and missed his flight. Much as I love the big, ugly, northern numpty cock-up #2 was a little more serious...

Back at the track Knighter had taken us to on the Monday, on my fourth lap and with my times over a second quicker, I stalled out on the concrete pipe and proceeded over the bars. With my left hand caught on the bike the knuckle on my clutch finger decided enough was enough and popped out of joint. **** *
****! It popped back straight away but all the same I headed back to KTM for a consultation with Dr Nicoll who told me to ice it.

Spode did his best to make me feel positive but I was devastated. I thought I had completely screwed it all up. The rest of the day and the drive to Vegas was spent with a frozen hand and the ice continued for the next couple of days as we tried to work out how we could strap my hand onto the bars. Donny the truck driver came up with the idea of using a Rekluse auto clutch on the bike as there was no way I could operate the clutch and hold onto the bike. Super Spode got straight over to the Rekluse crew as soon as we got to the event and they were pumped to get the system fitted to the KTM to help us out. Jolly nice chaps with a fantastic product.

The pro clutch can be used with or without the lever and this device was the difference between us getting to the start or not. It would take a bit of getting used to but it allowed us to get out onto the track. With team members 'Jonny Bodacious' and Keith 'The Legend' arriving from the UK as well as new team runner 'Irish' Stu being on the scene to help the Spode we were almost ready to get on with it.

Friday is for qualifiers. There are races all day to get 200 riders down to a final 10 places to join the already qualified and invited wildcard riders in the Saturday main show. There were some seriously fast riders out there qualifying and it was good to see how the track was being attacked. In the series this year there are some trials bikes competing and a guy on one actually won the Friday programme and then went on to set the fastest lap in Saturday qualifying as well! Next year the organisers are going to have a trials bike class as everyone else on track spends most of the time trying to wipe out the trials guys!

The situation with the three-round AMA Maxxis Endurocross series going into the Las Vegas decider was that Knighter had won two from two, had the points lead over Damon Huffman and was in the running for the \$50,000 Motorcycle Mechanics Institute triple crown if he took the win in the all three rounds. That along with the \$10,000 for the win on the night would mean that the Manxman could roll away from Vegas with a cool \$60,000 in his back burner! Not bad for a night in the office...

It would take a brave man to bet against Knighter on the night but this is Las Vegas and anything can happen in endurocross. That is the ultimate beauty of this racing.

On the Saturday afternoon riders get one sighting lap of the track after the track walk. That's right – just one lap to check the track. After this it's into groups of three to go to the line for the individual Hot Lap. This lap is done in front of the afternoon audience and is each rider's chance to put in a quick lap to determine the start position for the evening programme. Pressure cooker atmosphere as this is the start of the competition. >>>

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SX legend Damon Huffman

Knighter hit the track with his attacking style and looked under control. The 450 Toomer is a big weapon to manhandle around a track like Vegas and Knighter is the man for a bit of manhandling! He clocked the fastest time early on and I just sat on my bike looking on and pappin' myself as it was my turn soon. My hand was numb from the pain killers and I was pretty sure I couldn't make it around a lap never mind at a reasonable speed. The track was gnarly!

The Erzberg Rodeo winner from this year was Taddy Blazusiak from Poland. This guy was flown in by KTM for the race and the man has skills, serious skills. He's finished top 10 in world trials and rides his 250 KTM XC like a trials bike. Taddy ripped the track up and clocked the same time as DK! It was on like Donkey Kong! These two were the class of the field, even though Colton Haaker on his Montesa ended up with the fastest Hot Lap.

My first surreal moment of the day came just before my pretty tepid Hot Lap. I was waiting with Spode to push my bike out onto the Orleans Arena floor and the names were being called to go out for the lap. The gate guy called for John Dowd, Damon Huffman and Eric Sorby... The French supercrosser rolled by on his sweet Hooters-sponsored Kawi along with last year's champion and the Huff Daddy! Then my name was called along with the next rider to go behind me, "WALKER!"..."METZGER!" Holy sh*t! Mike Metzger was on track with me. I nearly fell over! This was amazing, I couldn't hold onto my bike but it all seemed okay because the Metz was there and we were in Vegas.

Spode told me to get on with it and I rolled out for my lap thinking 'f**k it, just have fun and do the best you can'. I put the lap in and was

able to hold on, Metz put his lap in and went over the bars. True Godfather stylee! I ended up with a clean and steady lap putting me around 30th out of 38.

With the Hot Lap out of the way and more pain killers slipping down my throat (thanks Donny) it was time for the evening programme. Knighter was pretty nervous as he had a lot riding on the race both in championship and financial terms. One mistake would be all it would take to ruin the championship. The big man was under pressure but he was looking fast and focussed on the job – surely his KTM team-mate Taddy wouldn't upset the appccart!?

The Orleans Arena holds everything from national ice hockey matches to NBA basketball ties and the place was sold out for the Maxxis Endurocross. We lined up for the introductions in qualifying order and it was cool to stand and listen to some Metz stories – the man is officially bonkers and very cool. Walking out onto the track to the crowd going nuts was another surreal moment in my life and I'm sure we all got the same buzz to be there. I got a pretty good cheer but I'm pretty sure I heard a very loud "how you doin'?" from Jonny Bodacious and KP up in the stands!

The heats were being called and the second one contained two very different people in the 12-rider line-up. On one hand you had David Knight – championship leader and off-road animal – and on the other hand you had me. Yep, me! I thought I was nervous until I looked at my right-hand man. Spode looked a wreck but he was trying his best to keep spirits up, the man cares and that is what counts in a friend and mechanic. The first heat went off and the crowd went off the scale as the carnage began.

Heat two was up and I was on the back row. I took up my slot between Knighter and another dude up the inside. I figured they would all panic with the big Manxman up the inside which could allow me to sneak around turn one and stay out of trouble. The plan kind of worked as DK nailed everyone out wide and I tried to slip around the inside with a clear track in front of me. Ty Davis came into view from my right and I hit him as DK shot on by with the rest of the field. I tried to get around Davis and ride a steady pace for the heat. Knighter ripped it and qualified straight through to the Main. I survived and finished 11th. The heat taught me a lot and there really are no prisoners taken in this sport – it's super-aggressive and you'll get used for traction at every possible moment. Superb!

The heats take the first two from each of the three races and the rest go to the three semi-finals with the winners going to the Main. Each heat and semi is a total battle with carnage at every corner. With my hand strapped up a little tighter it was time for the semis. I chose to line up for the semi on the inside on the back row again as it was safer. I had five laps to try to make the top five to make it to the LCQ. The inside worked again until I was hit from both sides. The rest of the first lap was intense as there seemed to be people wiping out everywhere. I wanted to stay on board and clean the track and hope that people wiped themselves out.

There were riders dropping like flies and I managed to make myself smile as I rode around having some battles with the likes of





French SX ace Eric Sorby



Spot the famous faces...



John Dowd's a past winner



...and then gets DK up the inside

Walker hits the logs tapped...

Huffman and Davis again. My highlight was a solid take-out repass on Davis as he cut me up coming out of the water section and I got to his inside on the next turn and tried to ride him off the track. Bar to bar with Ty Davis! Awesome! I was learning! My result of eighth in the semi wasn't good enough to transfer to the LCQ but as I rode off the track for the last time I knew I had given it all I had and all my hand would allow. I was excited because I had managed to race a little bit in the semi rather than simply riding round in survival mode.

I made the switch from racer to race fan and went to the stands to grab a seat for the final. This race promised to be an absolute ripper as

there was so much on the line and so much pressure on Knighter. Myself, Spode, Irish, KP and Jonny B all had our fingers crossed as the gate dropped.

Knighter managed to fight his way into the lead by the second corner and it was on like Cheech and Chong! Taddy was soon up to second and putting massive pressure on DK who was riding very conservatively. This isn't really his style as DK is all about attack. Taddy wasn't letting DK get comfortable and the crowd were going nuts. Mika Ahola was working his way through a pack of aggressive Americans including Lafferty, Huffman, Abbot, Aaron and Brazovich. There were bikes, bodies and plastics

















strewn all over the track as the battle at the front raged.

The big left-hand rock section was a telling part of the track. Taddy would come into it flat-out and jump to the inside of DK, hitting him every lap. David would pull away on the water section of the track but every time they got to the rocks Taddy would nail DK. It was awesome to watch but it wasn't really in the plan for Knighter. One slip or a bit of bike damage and the title would be gone. This is endurocross and the rules are simple – take no prisoners! Taddy wanted the win and the \$10,000 that went with it. He was riding like a man possessed and with DK trying to ride within himself for the championship

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*In the end Knighter plays
safe for the series title*



it seemed inevitable that Taddy would go by.

With the last lap flag at the ready DK went wide into the lower rock turn and Taddy ripped it to the inside, pivoted on the rock and took the lead. Could this be happening? Knighter's team-mate was going to take the win and cost the Manxman 60,000 big ones? The crowd made the building shake as all they want to see is great racing. That is what they pay for, entertainment and hard racing. No favours asked or given and it seems Taddy Blazusiak has this attitude. He took the flag and the dollars and Knighter took the number two position and the first AMA Maxxis Endurocross series title.

Our sports need passion and both these guys

showed it. Taddy was pumped and DK ghosted his bike over 10ft of tyres in disappointment! To be fair I would do more than ghost my bike if I had just lost \$60,000! This is the stuff of legend and with our sport full of 'professionals' who don't show emotion I loved the fact that David cut loose. Maybe the result would have been different had DK had nothing to lose but who knows? The race kicked ass and endurocross is going to go from strength to strength.

The series has an increased number of rounds next year and the carnage will begin all over in July when the series kicks off in Vegas. Get your holidays booked and get out there for the best racing on the planet!



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Mark Hooley ends
the season sixth
best 125cc pilot



THREE W EASY!

Brad O'Leary triples up for the AMCA 125cc title while it's David Campbell who grabs the Open class crown in a final round nail-biter...

Words and photos by Mike Wood



Brad O'Leary comes on strong at the end of the season to make it three 125cc crowns in a row



Tom Fish looks right at home in the wet at Condoover – well, if the name fits...



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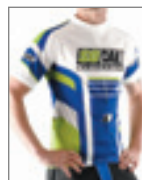
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THE DIRT BIKE SHOW
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David Campbell leads Ben Saunders – it was this close between them all season

While Brad O'Leary and David Campbell enjoyed emotional highs after winning the AMCA 125cc and Open class motocross titles, spare a thought for Phil Mercer and Ben Saunders. For virtually the entire 2007 season Phil and Ben had led the title chases before their rollercoaster motocross ride saw the wheel of fortune deal them silver instead of gold medals.

Ben, in his debut AMCA season, was just 35 seconds short of earning that Open class title. Leading the final moto of the season at Nympsfield and seemingly on his way to the crown, he was stopped in his tracks when the race was red-flagged due to a fallen rival. In the required re-run David Campbell produced a dream holeshot while Saunders was brought crashing down to earth in a collision that also collected Aaron Poolman and Danny Blakeley. Picking himself up and restarting last, Ben then accidentally hit his cut-out button, further delaying his recovery. So at the front a surprised but equally delighted Campbell took the win and also the AMCA title.

Also making his debut in AMCA racing, Campbell had been superbly consistent throughout the season, matching his rival Saunders result for result. Until the final round at Nympsfield they had filled the top two podium places in every round with only Clinton Barrs, Charlie Hollis and Aaron Poolman managing to collect moto wins. Entering that final decisive round, Saunders held a 13-point advantage but Campbell won both the opening two races – passing his rival in the process – before that crucial final moto of the year.

Winding the clock back to the first round at Cleobury in May there were already some notable absentees in the Open class as 2006 runner-up Elliot Barrs, Rich Mike-Jones and Paul Burn were all missing due to serious early-season injuries. Taking the first win of 2007 was Aaron Poolman, another former ACU rider. Known as a fast starter, Poolman did not quite display the consistency required to mount a serious title challenge and also switched from Honda to Kawasaki machinery during the course of the season. At that Cleobury opener Saunders and Campbell were already showing their incredible speed and stamina, sending out a clear warning that they were definite title contenders.

After a ridiculously long break of nine weeks round two of the 2007 series eventually arrived at a very wet Condover. So bad were the conditions that the meeting was eventually abandoned with just two races completed. Using his vast experience gained at top level motocross racing, Campbell splashed to victory in both clashes with Saunders in second. The ever-smiling Aaron Crowder – a rider who has competed on 125cc two-stroke, 250cc two-stroke, 250F and 450F machinery during his AMCA championship campaigns – took a great third overall.

With Saunders and Campbell again dominating at Kerry, it was the fourth round of the series at Branstion before they suffered their first defeats of the championship season. Both Charlie Hollis and Clinton Barrs took moto wins on the day before normal service was resumed in the final clash after Saunders, Campbell and Poolman had overhauled fast-starting Simon Lane.

Buoyed by his Branstion race success, Barrs was in confident mood during round five at Warmingham, pushing the top two contenders hard and recording another well deserved victory in the last moto of the day.

Barrs' fine form though was to be brought to a sudden halt on August Bank Holiday Monday at Wymeswold when he crashing out of moto two. So joining the dynamic duo on the podium again was the very consistent Aaron Crowder with Lane, Jamie Powell and Rick Du-Feu in hot pursuit.

Having fully recovered from his Wymeswold fall, Barrs returned to the winning habit by taking opening moto honours in the penultimate round at Walterstone, imposing what would be the last defeat of the season on Campbell. So it was onto Nympsfield where after leading the series since day one Saunders was to see his title dreams disappear in that fateful final moto of the season with DC proving the importance of never surrendering.

Over in the 125cc class Phil Mercer led the opening three rounds with Mark Hooley, Owen Delaney, Brad O'Leary, Matt Porter, James Lane and finally Lee Payne providing the main challenge. But during round four at Warmingham Phil was to lose his title chase advantage when a mysterious final moto engine stoppage meant that O'Leary was in control by just one single point. In his next two outings though at Wymeswold

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and Cleobury Mortimer, Mercer was back to his very best with four moto wins, a brace of overall victories and most importantly a return to the top of the championship table with a 43-point advantage.

With O'Leary now the victim of the mechanical gremlins – his KTM self-destructing at Cleobury – the very much in-form Payne stepped up to the plate to become Mercer's closest challenger. In a seriously impressive spell, the Lancastrian recorded four consecutive podium places while Porter was also finding some strong second half performances to move menacingly into the championship top five.

However, as the saying goes, it's never over until the fat lady sings and after the penultimate round at Walterstone that particular lady was probably rather confused regarding just who to warble for. Entering the event a clear favourite to take the 125cc title, Mercer left the Herefordshire venue a remarkable nine points in arrears as a very determined O'Leary stubbornly refused to relinquish his hard-earned crown. With Brad blasting to a brilliant maximum it was total heartache for Phil.

Starting with a through-the-pack ride for seventh in the opening moto he then suffered another DNF as electrical failure halted his Kawasaki in the second clash when he was about to relieve Brad of the moto lead. Moto three then produced arguably the race of the season as the two title contenders conjured up an absolute thriller. For virtually the entire duration they raced side by side disputing the lead until just two laps from home Phil spun off and stalled his motor. Unable to quickly fire the green machine back to life, Factory Phil was restricted to a 15th place finish.

With tensions running high, O'Leary, Mercer and Payne entered the final round of the AMCA series separated by just 20 points in the battle for the 125cc crown. Tension then further increased in the O'Leary camp as Brad seized his number one bike during qualification forcing him to jump aboard a new, unused 2008 machine.

Starting in style, Brad gave his new bike a winning debut with Phil a close second. Now trailing O'Leary in the title stakes by 12 points, Mercer was naturally very keen to grab the moto two win but instead his hopes were dashed when he was brought down in a second turn collision which also involved Payne. As O'Leary took full advantage of his rival's misfortune to get one hand on the championship trophy with another win, Mercer produced a stunning comeback ride to earn fourth at the flag behind Matt Porter and Lee Dunham.

Although Mercer took his title challenge to the wire by winning the final moto of the season a jubilant O'Leary was crowned champion for the third consecutive season. After completing his brilliant triple crown the Rugby-based rider immediately announced that he was switching to campaign a 450F in the Open class for 2008 – now that should be well worth watching!



Ben Saunders had
the title in his grasp

FINAL SERIES STANDINGS

125cc

1	Brad O'Leary	(FotoX/AMS KTM)	444 points
2	Phil Mercer	(Delkevic Kawasaki)	430
3	Lee Payne	(Malin Floors Kawasaki)	404
4	Matt Porter	(Select Homes Honda)	353
5	James Lane	(Honda Equipe)	292
6	Mark Hooley	(Servo Racing KTM)	243
7	Owen Delaney	(T+W Racing Yamaha)	233
8	Lee Dunham	(MotoExtreme Kawasaki)	217
9	Jamie Dobson	(MTR Motocross/Kyodie Racing Honda)	216
10	Scott Mathia	(Wulfsport KTM)	212

Open class

1	David Campbell	(Honda)	516 points
2	Ben Saunders	(Race Connections Honda)	501
3	Charlie Hollis	(Invex Foods Honda)	367
4	Aaron Crowder	(Sandifords Honda)	338
5	Clinton Barrs	(Wildmoor/Wulfsport Honda)	330
6	Simon Lane	(Honda Equipe)	323
7	Jamie Powell	(Stevens Yamaha)	311
8	Rick Du-Feu	(Delkevic Kawasaki)	308
9	Aaron Poolman	(G+S Patios/Midwest Racing Kawasaki)	278
10	Danny Blakeley	(Silvesters Yamaha)	194

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SACRE BLEU!

WITH RC A NO-SHOW IT'S LEFT TO THE YAMAHAS OF CHAD REED AND GRANT LANGSTON TO SLUG IT OUT TO BE CROWNED KING OF BERCY

Words and photos by ALEX HODGKINSON



Max Anstie upstages the adults to be the star of the show at Bercy

Who needs RC? Certainly not Bercy! For the first time in years the POPB is a complete sell-out right up to the rafters on all three nights. The people come to see racing – great racing – and they get just that, in particular from a couple of non-Americans who have not forgotten their roots and have not been turned into corporate Stateside zombies.

Reed and Langston lift the roof off with three days of titanic struggles, Mighty Max Anstie joins in to ensure there's not a single French or Yankee winner all weekend and there is even a poignant reflection on the days when America still had a soul as Jeremy McGrath returns, one week before his 36th birthday, not to milk the cow but to help out old friends.

Showtime knows he can't turn back the clock. "I just hope I can take a few holeshots and hold them off for a few laps," he admits before a wheel is turned. It only happens once – in a two-lap qualifier of the mid-evening KO competition – but no-one resents one final brief moment of glory for the most successful rider in SX history.

But there are really only two men in it. Even two-time King of Bercy Andrew Short is 20 seconds off the colonial boys over 15 laps, his brace of seconds in six starts coming only when Langston ejects.

Hot-favourite Reedy, looking slimmer, more energetic and the open, cheerful figure of his days with Jan De Groot, only loses one moto – the very first – but it could so easily have gone 3-3 with Zulu. The South African has AMA podium written all over him, still aggressive but more controlled and he is keeping the Australian at arm's length in the Saturday finale until he cross-ruts a take-off and launches onto the concrete.

And Grant also proves he can ride with his head as he defies Chad's every move for eight laps in the final race of the weekend, a fitting reward for the Sunday crowd who normally get short-changed as injuries, exhaustion and a general desire to see the weekend out set in.

Reed and Langston chat, laugh and genuinely smile for the crowd on the podium – they actually sound like they mean it – but Jean-Sebastien Roy and Jeremy Van Horebeek are a little out of their depth to help the Rest of the World in the meaningless team stakes.

That goes to the more solid US quartet who sweep the placings on Saturday and Sunday after a shock defeat on the opening night when the French reign. But not with their stars!

Even before Sorby and Seb Pourcel join Renet in the sick bay they are self-igniting and the French star, just as he had been a couple of years back, is Benjamin Coisy. Coming off an unbeaten run in the SX Tour, Benjy makes Shorty sweat for third on Friday, has the pace again on Saturday but returns to his crashing ways and it is Sunday before the track doctor is on the spot to look into his eyes and count him out.

The only UK link in the main programme on the first two days is Gautier Paulin and the Molson new boy is struggling for set-up on night one. They get it right for Saturday and the European champ blasts through the pack to pass McGrath before the night is out and, despite a massive get-off chasing Mike Brown who has flown in from Madrid to deputise for McGrath who has a prior engagement on Monday, Gautier is top Frenchie on the final day. Mind you, with Sorby and Coisy seeing stars, Pourcel coughing blood and Renet with a pinned thigh after breaking it in Friday training, perhaps he should be!

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Grant Langston looks right at home indoors on a 450F – expect AMA podiums next season

Max's victory speech goes down well



Before it all starts the Frenchies think this can be their year but they also get demolished by Max in the 85s. The stadium is decked out in sponsorship yellow but there is only one Suzuki as RC and Ken Roczen cry off with injuries.

"It's a pity Kenny isn't here," quips the smart 14-year-old from Newbury. "I'd like to have shown him he has no chance against my KTM."

Roczen's absence doesn't mean – on paper at least – that Max will get it all his own way but Euro champ Jason Clermont and French SX champ Jordi Tixier are devastated by the Brit's pace! Surprisingly, Tixier is struggling through the savage whoops all weekend while Clermont can't get the rhythm section right. By Sunday Tixier is so desperate he can't stay on two wheels for more than a lap-and-a-half at once and it is not until the last day that Clermont runs top three.

'Too Hip' Max even learns two full sentences of French to deliver from the podium and remembers to use a tip from Uncle Alex on the Sunday. "I'm glad Jason got round turn two today and made a race of it!"

When the French hero does gate second to Max and thinks he can push onto our boy's rear wheel, Max simply knocks it up a gear and disappears at two seconds a lap. Hardly surprising, Max has proved during the afternoon quali that he can lap within three seconds of Reedy!

And he doesn't forget to butter up the Frenchies at the end. "This is a superb event and the track was really great this year. I'm off to America tomorrow but I'll be back next year. I wouldn't miss Bercy for anything."

And neither would we!

Mmmmm, shiny...



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A FAN'S VIEW

ONE NIGHT IN HEAVEN >>

Words by STEFAN PAETOW

"Bercy!" announces a curt female voice as the Métro pulls into the station. "Bercy!" The annual Bercy Supercross is a spectacle to experience at least once. All-time greats from across the globe have graced the event in the past and years after many of them still say 'oui' without hesitation to an invitation.

This year's Bercy Supercross is special. It is its silver jubilee and, after 25 editions without them, 450cc bikes have been allowed for the first time. With Bercy being an institution in France, tickets sell out insanely fast. Weeks before the event Larivière, the organisation behind Bercy, lets people know that the place is fully sold out for Friday and Saturday night. As luck will have it a week before the event some tickets open up for Saturday. Perfect!

My journey starts at 7am on Saturday morning with a bleary-eyed me standing at the train station in Oxford. Three hours later I'm on the Eurostar watching first the Kent and then the French countryside fly by. By 1:30pm local time the grass-covered pyramid that is the Palais de Omnisport Paris-Bercy is in front of me. And even at lunchtime the place is buzzing.

Time goes way too slowly but by 7pm the terraces are crawling with people queuing to get in. Slowly I make my way into a covered atrium liberally littered with food and drink concessions and the occasional Moto Verte stand. My seat at Gate F, Row 10 is actually pretty good. It is exactly the middle of the lower tier, perfect for viewing. The whoops run by right in front of me, the rhythm section is the next lane over.

The opening show is spectacular and then the racing starts with the French SX Tour that ends at Bercy on the weekend. One rider in particular, Benjamin Coisy, has the crowd's adulation. He is clearly above the rest of his peers in the class. Then the little 85cc riders come out for their race. Max Anstie wins – of course – and, to make everyone's night, he tells them in French how much he loves Bercy. The crowd goes wild. The Asics Freestyle Tour's first session, a warm-up with some simple whips, opens the first main race which Chad Reed takes.

Then we have our first break. A 20-minute interval transforms the atrium into a throng of people. For a non-smoker like me this is hell. The space suddenly fills with the fumes of burning tobacco and paper and staying in my seat and breathing in the exhaust fumes is probably better. At least there were a lot of two-strokes around in the first hour so it's memories of good times. The freestylers come out after the break for the second of their three sessions before it's time for racing to start again.

The knock-out – the Tournoi SX-Match – fills the space between the first and the second break which leaves Chad Reed the winner. Again it is Benjamin Coisy who gets the cheers as he battles with Grant Langston. He stays ahead of Langston for pretty much the entire race which means that he will do battle with Chad Reed in the final. The crowd goes crazy but then Langston makes his move, takes second and takes the fun away for the French. So Chad Reed gets a lot of love from the crowd instead.

In the final session for the freestylers Tom Pages does something incredible – it's what he calls a double grab flip, a variation of a double grab during a back-flip. Of course, the crowd goes insane. So does he. Apparently he's worked on this for so long and now, in front of an 18,000-strong crowd, he's done it. He rips his jersey off and chucks it into the crowd. His gloves follow and finally his helmet. Someone gives him a spare helmet and he goes back to doing more tricks topless. Risky but the girls love it!

The final race is at hand. Again it is Chad Reed who wins the race and with that the night is over. It is nearly midnight, the sandwich shops on the road are doing a roaring trade, as are the boulangerie and the Café de Bercy on the corner. But by 1am it will be all deserted, only to start again on Sunday morning for the matinée performance, the big final to crown the new King of Bercy.



A relaxed Chad Reed is crowned King of Bercy



SUPERCROSS DE PARIS BERCY XXV

RESULTS >>

1	Chad Reed	(Australia) Yamaha	1-1-1
2	Grant Langston	(South Africa) Yamaha	2-3-2
3	Andrew Short	(USA) Honda	4-2-3
4	Josh Grant	(USA) Honda	8-5-4
5	Justin Brayton	(USA) KTM	12-4-5
6	Cyrille Coulon	(France) Yamaha	6-8-8
7	Benjamin Coisy	(France) Honda	3-9-16
8	Marvin Musquin	(France) Kawasaki	7-7-9
9	Gautier Paulin	(France) Kawasaki	10-11-7
10	Eric Sorby	(France) Kawasaki	9-13-13



SX legend Jeremy McGrath leads Andrew Short and Langston

SHOOT 'EM UP!

TOMMY SEARLE AND JEFF ALESSI ARE QUICKEST ON THE DRAW AS THE BRITISH SX SERIES KICKS OFF AT SHEFFIELD

Words by **Sean Lawless** Photos by **Sutty**

At times it's easy to feel short-changed when it comes to supercross in Britain. We obviously can't compete with the big bucks thrown at the AMA series and nobody does showbiz quite like Bercy. But what we have got we need to appreciate and when Future West's Sheffield SX throws up the standard of racing we see in the Pro Open final what's not to appreciate?

Jeff Alessi takes the holeshot as the gate drops on the big guns' Main Event and sweeps into the whoops chased by Spaniard Xavier Hernandez and the twin-prong Yank attack of Jason Thomas and Mike Brown. With a clear track Alessi's able to open up a gap as Thomas slips off and quickly remounts just ahead of Gordon Crockard who's been delayed after getting mired in the first corner chaos.

Gordy's bid for SX glory ends when he hits the eject button in the rhythm section while at the front it's a case of 'will he, won't he' as Brownie closes on Alessi. Both Americans get a little buck-wild in the whoops before the British MX2 champ's charge is derailed after Alessi's able to dive past a back-marker who then baulks the CAS Honda man.

"It's been a great night," grins Alessi after topping the podium. "I did good and I'm going to go home to America now with the win. The track is just a normal track as supercross tracks go but this one broke down a lot more and they made it pretty difficult through the

whoops – a couple of times my back end was coming out and I had to use my strength to keep that bike on two wheels."

For a man like Mike Brown second is never good enough but the veteran American's still pretty relaxed at the end. "The track was good and the racing was good. Jeff was fast tonight, I just got arm-pump pretty bad. For sure I should have had him, I just couldn't ride to my ability. I was about 60 per cent because my arms tightened up but that's racing. I kinda messed up coming out of the whoops – he did too but I couldn't get a wheel on him."

The Pro Lites final is all about one man – factory KTM pilot Tommy Searle. The FIM world #2 gets squeezed out at the start by Elliot Banks-Browne but after turning tight into the whoops and then blasting through them he sets himself to take the lead. From here it's effectively game over – give or take a couple of bobbles in the whoops.

"It was easy for me," reckons Tommy afterwards. "The track's tricky – the whoops especially and I didn't want to keep hitting them as hard as I could because I had a few moments. I didn't feel so fast through the whoops – I kept making mistakes – but it was okay and at least I won. It's been a good night, I came here to have fun and I did."

With Tommy a clear winner Jean Sebastien Roy comes home second ahead of Shaun Simpson.





Tommy Searle smokes 'em!

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RESULTS

PRO OPEN >>

- 1 **Jeff Alessi** (Honda)
- 2 **Mike Brown** (Honda)
- 3 **Colton Facciotti** (Yamaha)
- 4 **Jason Thomas** (Honda)
- 5 **Shaun Simpson** (KTM)
- 6 **Jean Sebastien Roy** (Yamaha)
- 7 **Xavier Hernandez** (Yamaha)
- 8 **Doug Dehaan** (Honda)
- 9 **Ryan Lockhart** (Suzuki)
- 10 **Ashley Greedy** (Honda)

PRO LITES >>

- 1 **Tommy Searle** (KTM)
- 2 **Jean Sebastien Roy** (Yamaha)
- 3 **Shaun Simpson** (KTM)
- 4 **Colton Facciotti** (Yamaha)
- 5 **Lewis Gregory** (Suzuki)
- 6 **Ashley Greedy** (Honda)
- 7 **Xavier Hernandez** (Yamaha)
- 8 **Elliot Banks-Browne** (Suzuki)
- 9 **Luke Remmer** (Yamaha)
- 10 **Ryan Lockhart** (Suzuki)

CLUBMAN OPEN >>

- 1 **Charlie Hollis** (Honda)
- 2 **Darren Manning-Coe** (KTM)
- 3 **Danny Blakely** (Yamaha)
- 4 **Mark Atkinson** (Honda)
- 5 **Martin Downer** (Honda)

CLUBMAN LITES >>

- 1 **Ricky Lethaby** (Yamaha)
- 2 **Darren Manning-Coe** (KTM)
- 3 **Carl Jones** (Honda)
- 4 **Cossard Vincent** (Honda)
- 5 **Brad Nixon** (KTM)



The long flight from the US of A is worth it for Pro Open winner Jeff Alessi

Max Anstie tears up the track on his new BW85cc KTM



MAX ATTACKS!

NEW KTM SIGNING
UPSTAGES THE
ADULTS >>

While Alessi and Tommy Gun are doing the business in the Pro adult divisions, the stand-out star of the youth races is new KTM signing Max Anstie. As fast as any of the adults through the whoops on his BW85, Max's work ethic and natural talent shine through at the Hallam FM Arena.

"I've been working hard with my dad," grins Merv's awesome offspring. "He's definitely great at teaching. The main thing's just to have fun – you have fun you ride 10 times better. The whoops were better this morning when they were new. Now they're all squared up and horrible but apart from that they've done a really good track here tonight. I think they've had to make it a little bit easier because last year the whoops here were really sharp for the little guys."

"Overall it was a really great race and I always enjoy coming back to Sheffield as a one-off because I normally don't race in England a lot. I'm looking forward to the next supercross round – and especially Bercy next weekend."

"The KTM is definitely a great bike. Kawasaki have always been great to me but it's time for a change now."

FREUDIAN TIP!

Words by Neil Drew

The great psychologist realised that our words are a window to our true feelings so it pays to remember if we talk the talk we really can walk the walk...

HAVE YOU ever listened carefully to the words the best competitors in the world use and then compared what they say to the kind of things that you say? One of the founders of modern day psychology – Sigmund Freud – realised that the words we use are like a window to the real thoughts that go on in our minds and that our true actions and intentions will be reflected by those words. It's okay – just keep reading all will become clear.

Let's take an example and this one is a personal pet hate. The word 'try' – what does it mean to try? It means to attempt, to have a go at. Using the word try implies failure, it implies that you're going to make an effort so you can't be criticised if you fail because you said you were going to try. If you were going to send your engine off for a rebuild and the shop said "we'll try and have that done for you in a couple of weeks" how much confidence would that fill you with? Very little I bet. Now, what would you feel if that shop said to you "we'll have that back to you at the latest a fortnight today"? That's completely different isn't it, far more commitment and certainty.

Now put that in the context of racing and imagine a time in the future when you might be faced with a challenge. Say in your mind "I am going to try and do that" or "I am going to try to do a better job of that than last time". How does that feel? It simply doesn't inspire or motivate does it?

Let's do the opposite. Imagine the same time in the future – the same situation that you just thought about a moment ago – but this time say in your mind "I am really going to enjoy doing that" or "I can do that" or "I am looking forward to nailing that". If you have done this simple exercise properly and said those things in your mind with meaning and conviction then you will have noticed a complete difference in how you feel about that particular task. Simple isn't it.

How does this work? Well, it is our emotions and feelings which are the driver behind virtually everything we do – how we feel about something determines how we approach things.

Determination, attitude and the outcome also has an effect on those people who are around us. Take the example of the football player who has just missed an open goal or a penalty. He walks away with his head drooped, his shoulders

are forward and rounded, his internal feelings are reflected externally. Now what sort of things do you think he will be saying about himself inside his head? It doesn't take a lot of working out. Now, how do the other players in his team look? They look pretty despondent too and are reflecting the feelings of the player who has just messed up.

I know that this has been spoken about and covered a lot but do you remember when Johnny Wilkinson scored that last-minute drop goal the year England won the Rugby World Cup? Could you even begin to imagine the immense pressure that he must have been under, yet he still kept his composure and popped it between the posts. Before he took the kick he simply followed the same routine that he always follows which starts with an internal belief that he is going to make the kick successfully, then he visualises it in his mind, seeing it go over the bar. This kept him in the zone. He felt confident and sure of his abilities and his body language, feelings, attitude and results reflected his thinking and belief.

As for the football player, I spoke at great length with someone who missed a penalty once when representing his country. When we really got down to the bare basics it turned out that before he even went up to place the ball on the spot he was thinking about what it would be like to miss. He said in his mind – and I quote – "I am going to try for the keeper because I think he will go to one side".

At that precise moment he remembered having an image of missing and he remembers his nerves becoming even more intense as he didn't want to fail. Notice the mistakes. He was thinking about trying. He was thinking about someone else rather than what he was doing. He actually considered what it would be like to miss, then it was confirmed by the exaggeration of his nerves. Finally he was thinking that he didn't want to fail. He was doing everything he needed to do in order to fail. Johnny Wilkinson did everything he could to succeed.

I read an article recently that compared two motocross riders – a current top rider and one who is currently getting himself back together. The rider who is off his true ability used the word try as a permanent part of his thinking while the other rider didn't. Again the language is a

window to the workings of the mind and reflects a rider's inner belief – or lack of it.

Now let's look at a few example statements and ways of thinking that can be detrimental to our achievements. "I hope to do well" lacks conviction or drive – it's essentially praying that everything works out and that somehow some luck might come into play. What about if you said something like "I'm up for it, I am focused and I am ready"? That has a completely different attitude. Often people may say something like "I want to get a better result" – wanting is wishing and hoping in disguise. Again, it doesn't have much drive at all and if anything it creates a feeling of anxiety, like you've got to do something against your true will. What about if it was rephrased to something like "my goal is to finish in x position"? Now you have something to aim for, now your efforts can become more focused.

Using far more positive and directed statements can change the way you feel, they can change the thinking, motivation, determination and ultimately the outcome. If you use this advice in combination with everything else that you may have learned from these articles and everything else that you will learn from future articles – and use it properly, conscientiously and with conviction – then you will get better results and your feelings and motivation will change for the better.

Be aware of what you are saying and thinking, become more aware of the feelings that are attached to those thoughts, start to change one thing at a time, get used to being aware of yourself far more and you will give yourself a great opportunity to better yourself. In these modern times of competition equipment is so close in performance that it comes down to having the edge in any area you can in order to achieve greater results. More and more top competitors are using their minds in better and better ways and the information that I share with you in these articles is a brief introduction to some of the tools that are actually being used to good effect by some of the world's best.

The most important thing, as always, is to enjoy your sport. On its own this creates better results which changes beliefs. Changing beliefs increases confidence. Increased confidence equals better results. And better results lead to goal achievement. Simple isn't it?



Drew who?

Competition mind coach

Neil Drew is a former MX and enduro racer and a qualified sports mind coach. At present he is coaching two national champions and several GP competitors and has helped many amateur and professional athletes from all over the world. He can be contacted via DBR or through his website at www.competitionmind.co.uk



Steve Cox is an American moto-journalist who follows the entire AMA SX/MX tour. Since moving on from US weekly Cycle News he's struck out on his own to do the freelance thing and last year launched a new bi-weekly MX magazine – Motocross Illustrated – covering both AMA and GP action. He knows the sport and its personalities like few others and as our US Editor provides insight straight from the Stateside scene...

BIG GAME HUNTER!

Having shot down everyone in the Lites class – plus the odd zebra – Ryan Villopoto is setting his sights on James Stewart for '09...

Ryan Villopoto is hot property right now. Even though he still has the 2008 campaign to go ride for the Monster Energy/Pro Circuit Kawasaki squad, 450cc teams are lining up to bid on his services for 2009 and beyond. And for good reason – RV has already amassed two AMA Lites national titles in his two years of racing, one supercross championship (where he won all but one event in his championship) and two individual and team championships at the Motocross des Nations.

This year's MXdN was practically a Ryan Villopoto benefit as he won both of his motos outright – the only small-bike rider ever to do that – and won one of the motos by over a minute! Needless to say, the future looks incredibly bright for the pint-sized redhead. ♦



AFTER BATTLING HARD WITH
TEAM-MATE BEN TOWNLEY,
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TO CLAIM HIS SECOND LITES TITLE



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DBR: Three years ago, when you were racing your first couple Nationals, did you see this success coming?

RV: "No. I came in just hoping to see where I was. I did good that first supercross season then won the outdoors in my first try. Since then it's been all about trying to make sure I stay on top. Once you get there it's kind of hard to repeat what you've done. I also don't want to let everybody else down."

DBR: Is it added pressure now?

RV: "Yeah, a little bit but it's nothing you haven't asked for. Everything I've done this year has been good and I've had fun. I couldn't ask for anything else."

DBR: Do the constant comparisons to Ricky Carmichael make for even more pressure?

RV: "What he's done is huge and he's won so many races and everything. I really don't look at trying to match what he's done or anything. What I do is what I do and hopefully I can make a name for myself – maybe get something right in the middle. Maybe not 10 [outdoor titles] but maybe in the middle. Make sure I stay on top as much as possible."

DBR: If you ask Carmichael he didn't think he'd get 15 National titles either so he kind of approached it like you do...

RV: "There's nothing you can try to plan out or make sure something happens at this time or whatever. Everything's in the air in racing."

DBR: Many riders that come out of the amateur ranks with a ride like yours sort of act as if they've made it. Why don't you have that attitude?

RV: "Just because you've signed your deal or whatever doesn't mean you've made it. I guess 'making it' is probably a couple years in the 450 class. The 125 deal is not easy but it's nothing like 450 stuff. You've got to ride twice the supercrosses and everything's really close. I guess you haven't 'made it' until you're a veteran in

the 450 class and show that you can stay on top there."

DBR: When you were still racing as an amateur did you even think about when you would be racing the 450 class in supercross?

RV: "I never looked at it at all. I guess everybody has a chance of getting there but you don't look at it like it's going to happen. Not at all."

DBR: Now that you've gotten a supercross title and two outdoor titles the 450cc class is on the horizon. Now you can probably see your 450cc career approaching...

RV: "I can see myself racing it but I don't know where... I'm sure I'll be somewhere up there but I don't know where. I just need to make sure I can stay up there and not be one of those guys that gets a factory ride and then isn't very good and has to work at it for a long time. Hopefully, I can sort of step into it doing stuff like I've done here."

DBR: Experts predict that you're the guy that possibly could take down James Stewart in a couple years. That's how the sport works – eventually a new guy will knock off the established guy on top. There's not anyone better to look at right now than you.

RV: "I guess not now – not anyone who's going to move up yet. I've got one year left and then I've got to move out. It's not like I want to. I mean, I want to, because that's where the big class is..."

DBR: Are you worried about how your riding style will suit a 450?

RV: "No, not at all. I had a 450 last year and I was riding it. The way I ride it, it won't be any big deal."

DBR: When you were racing against your team-mate Ben Townley this summer it seemed civil between the two of you. Was it?

RV: "If I beat Ben the weekend before we'd go to the next race and still talk to each other and still hang out. Everything was good, I think. If he beat me the last weekend and I'd show up as the underdog going into the next weekend it was still the same."

"If it would've started to get bad, I know Mitch would've not ever let it get there. And it wasn't. Me and Ben would still talk and everything. I mean, we wouldn't share lines, like, 'here, try this line' or whatever but we'd talk. We'd talk going into staging and it was always like that and then when we went out to race it was clean racing. Everybody saw that. We weren't out there to kill each other."

DBR: You probably weren't going out of your way to be friends with him, though, were you?

RV: "Once we get out on the track then, yeah, it's everybody for themselves but I think he knew how I raced and I think I knew how Ben raced. He wouldn't give you a whole lot of room and neither would I but you didn't have to worry about getting slammed or getting shoved off the track."

DBR: What about your line selection? Where do you find those crazy outside lines?

RV: "Line choice and where you pick to pass people is a big deal but I think me and Ben were on a different level than everybody else so coming through the pack wasn't that hard."

DBR: Doesn't your line choice have a lot to do with your riding style too?

RV: "Yeah, I kind of go wherever and ride a lot of the outsides. Sometimes I shouldn't but whatever."

DBR: What about supercross? Where did you find the speed from 2006 to 2007?

RV: "I guess I just got settled and a lot of the guys moved out like GL [Grant Langston] and a lot of the guys that were at the top. It was kind of like a new class and a lot of the younger guys were racing. And obviously not getting hurt four weeks before helped too."

DBR: Yeah, you broke your collarbone just before the 2006 season started. Speaking of collarbones, is the one that's healing now the same one that you broke before?



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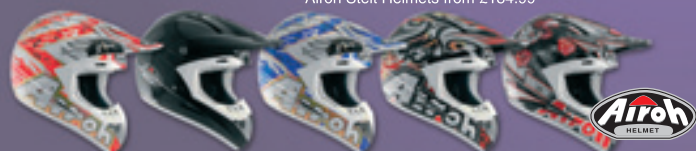
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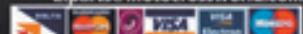
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VILLOPOTO WAS THE STAND-OUT STAR AT THE 2007 MOTOCROSS DES NATIONS



RV: "No, it's the other one. Now I've got a scar on both of them."

DBR: You've also got a bandage on your throttle wrist. You didn't have it fixed up to turn the throttle even harder, did you?

RV: "The throttle hand is what I always taped and wore a brace on and I had that worked on a little bit so hopefully it will be better. I would like to quit wearing the brace but we'll have to see. What they did to it was pretty minor so by the time my collarbone's good this will be good. It was just that I had the time off and it gave me an opportunity to get it handled."

DBR: What do you have left to prove in the Lites class?

RV: "I guess there's nothing I can show them, I just want to go out and hopefully defend what I won last year or go and ride East and try to win that. It's kind of up in the air depending on when I want to ride and everything."

DBR: Is it possible you might ride Lites West SX again?

RV: "Yeah, I still could ride West."

DBR: I thought you wanted to ride East so that you will have ridden all of the tracks before moving up to 450s...

RV: "I did but I guess Kawi has talked to Mitch about it and we're sort of leaning toward having me ride West but it's still up in the air. If they think that obviously you've got to sort of plan on riding West. I had to start riding a little bit earlier than I wanted to but whatever."

DBR: What do people not know about Ryan Villopoto?

RV: "I don't know. I guess they kind of know everything about me. We just went to Africa and did some hunting. I got like eight animals. I guess you wouldn't call it hunting. It was more just killing. But it was a lot of fun."

DBR: What did you get? Can you say?

RV: "I can't remember everything but I got a kudu, a zebra, a gemsbok, a lechwe... All kinds of stuff."

DBR: Is that your favourite thing, to go hunting?

RV: "You can get away from everything. It's just nice to go hang out and not have to deal with all of the bull."

DBR: There is a lot to deal with, too. You're 19 years old and you have to deal with people like me pawing at you for interviews all the time, fans wanting autographs, commitments to sponsors etc. Doesn't it seem like a lot sometimes?

RV: "It's nothing that you didn't ask for. You know what you're getting into before you get into it if it ever goes that far. You're brought up around it, too. You know what you're getting into so you just accept it. It's not really a big deal. It gets old sometimes with everybody around but that's part of the job."

DBR: But not everybody has that attitude in your field. There are a few riders that could do without all of that stuff. Is that something you're aware of, that you want to stay good to the fans and media so that you don't develop a negative fan following?

RV: "Yeah, obviously I want to have as many fans as I can. Those are the people that go to the races for you and support you so I want to keep it that way, for sure."

DBR: There was a lot of talk going into the Motocross des Nations about Antonio Cairoli and stuff like that because he won that second moto when you went off the track in England and has had a stellar 2007 season in Europe. Going into that race, were you prepared to do battle with that guy?

RV: "Yeah, obviously he was the guy over in Europe – him and Pourcel. It wasn't Budds Creek, though. When I go over to his place, I don't say 'oh, well, he beat me because I haven't ridden the track before'. So I don't think he should say that he got beat because I've ridden there. That was my third time ever riding at Budds Creek. It's not like I have a lot of time on the track. So I wouldn't do that. I'm a guy that gets a track down quick and I don't need a lot of time on it. But he won over there and he beat me last year at the des Nations so I wanted to at least try to beat him this year."

DBR: Do you see yourself racing the Motocross des Nations for the foreseeable future?

RV: "Yeah, if I get picked for it I'll go. It's a fun race. I obviously want to go over there and show that our US motocross is better than theirs and that we're hopefully faster when we show up. As long as it's not somewhere dangerous."



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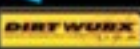
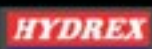
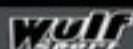
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DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE!

The message boards are buzzin' Stateside with who's going to be hot when Anaheim 1 kicks off but our industry insider can smell bull***t...

Words by STEVE MATTHES Photo by STEVE COX

It's that time of the year here in the US of A when there isn't much racing and the 'fans' on the internet get into huge fights about whether their favourite riders are going to win the upcoming supercross championship. You know the old saying 'everybody's undefeated'? Well, it's usually used in stick and ball sports over here but it could also apply to motocross.

For example, just the other day I read on some internet forum that somebody thinks Team Yamaha's Josh Hill should be top five in the 450 supercross with 'some top threes' thrown in there. This guy has to be truly delusional to believe this. How many riders have come out in their first year in the 'Supercross' class and hit the podium? I'm thinking McGrath, RC, Bradshaw – all legends of the sport. I really don't think a kid that has not won a race and, last I saw, was badly out of shape is going to come out and podium against one of the deepest fields in years.

So when you read on the internet or hear through some sources that so and so is five seconds a lap faster than last year or some rider dropped his lap times 10 seconds on his new bike just smile and nod and realise that it doesn't mean anything. Even if it's true. When I was at Yamaha and Mach1 Yamaha signed Ezra Lusk in 2004 we would go to the test track and I swear on my life he was the fastest guy there seven times out of 10! Faster than Reed, Vuillemin, Ferry and Voss. In fact, Chad would get his guys to film Ezra just to see what he was doing. It was amazing for sure. What happened at Anaheim 1? Yogi was running third after coming through the pack and cartwheeled in the whoop section, hurting his thumb and beginning the downward spiral that would end up being his final season.

Remember the Transworld Motocross magazine cover featuring Jeremy McGrath on his new KTM? I believe the headline read something like 'I'm two seconds a lap faster on this bike'. That turned out pretty good, huh? Believe half of what you read and nothing that you hear about the off-season speed of the guys.

One thing I've learned over time is that you are what you are. Once Anaheim 1 comes around and more than likely Monster Energy/Kawasaki's James Stewart comes out and destroys the field (especially with the latest news that he's hired RC's old trainer Aldon Baker – I think the only thing James was missing was a 'programme' and now he's going to get it) and San Manuel Yamaha's Chad Reed gets second, everybody will settle into their groove and place where they should place.

I remember when I was Tim Ferry's mechanic and people would always act surprised when he would podium. I was thinking that really it wasn't a big deal – the guy can ride a bike with the best of them and that skill is not one that you can just

acquire. You can slowly get better by working at it but speed is like having skills with the birds, you either have it or you don't.

The guys in the off-season work on getting in shape, they work on pounding out laps and getting their bike dialled in but in the end what you got is what you got. It's really, really hard to all of a sudden become a race and podium contender. That's part of the problem we are facing over in America, there simply isn't enough guys who can win.

Everybody likes to point to NASCAR over here as where the sport needs to go (that's not my opinion but that's another column). You remember NASCAR? That hillbilly sport that races two-ton, carburetted, eight-cylinder cars around an oval? Well, much to my chagrin, this sport is huge in America and I have to give the organization credit – they have lots of different winners and different brands having success. That keeps the fans interested and keeps the sponsors interested because everybody wants a winner right? NASCAR is also great because they change the spec rules many time in a season

their seats wondering 'who's gonna win?', 'what are the points going to be after this race?' and 'man, that girl shooting a t-shirt at me with a bazooka is really hot' because that sells TV time and tickets and those are things we need. There is as much chance as supercross getting big like NASCAR when one rider is dominating as there is Josh Coppins blowing his 2007 points lead. Wait...er...he did? Never mind (sorry Josh, just kidding)...

In the last 20 years of supercross there have only been nine riders that have won the title. Nine riders! That's not what you would call parity folks. I would look up the amount of race winners over that nine years but I'm too lazy to go through my AMA record book but suffice to say it's not a whole lot more than nine.

It's a real mental sport as well as one that relies heavily on somebody's skill, not machinery. You just can't switch from one brand to another and rely on the team to provide you with improvement – it's gotta come from within. Kind of like the exact opposite of F1. On the mental side, once you have won

No matter what the online pundits reckon, James Stewart is the man to beat at Anaheim 1



when a manufacturer starts winning too much, just in the spirit of competition. How great is that? Can you imagine the AMA suddenly making James Stewart strap weights to his bike? Or what about if the AMA threw the red flag in the middle of the race when there is a small pile-up and James has a huge lead? These things happen in NASCAR and they blame it on 'debris' on the track. It's kind of a running joke among the drivers – some drivers even throw things on the track in hopes of getting a red flag.

The sport needs that, it needs fans to be on the edge of

racers and titles then you have the confidence that you can do it and it gets easier every time. I've been around champions and race winners and worked side-by-side with them every day and they share a common trait – the arrogance that they think they can do anything on a motorcycle any time they want.

That is what winners think, that there is no way possible that something can go wrong. For Tedesco, Byrne, Short and others to just find this mindset after getting beat bad the last few years is as big of a challenge as actually managing to beat James Stewart.





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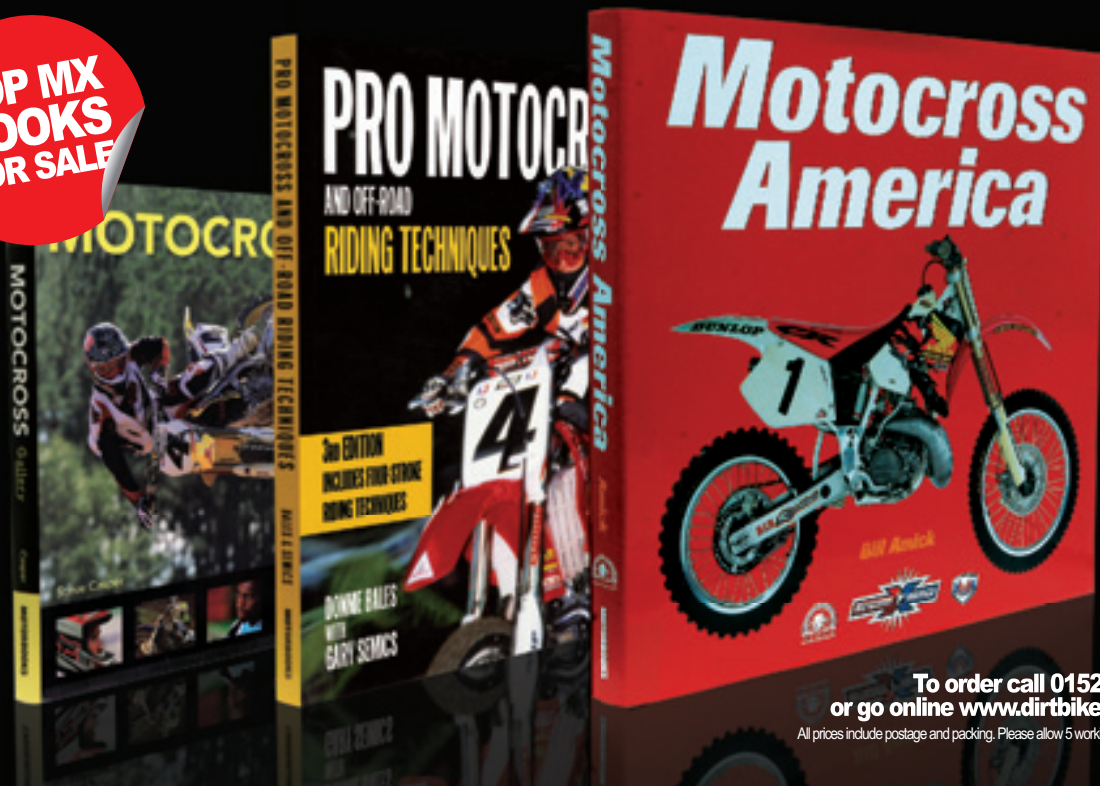
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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO...

During the past three years few people have worked more closely with Ricky Carmichael than Makita Suzuki team manager – and MX legend in his own right – Roger De Coster. We caught up with 'The Man' and asked him about all working with 'The GOAT'...

Words by Jonty Edmunds Photos by Jonty Edmunds and American Suzuki



Roger and Ricky – 'The Man' and 'The GOAT' forged a formidable partnership



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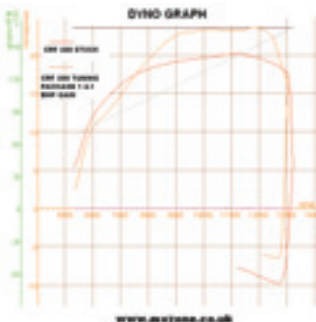


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**David Philpotts gives
Ricky a hard time at the
Motocross des Nations**



Roger De Coster is one of a very select group of people who have genuinely been there and done it all. A five-time world 500cc champion during the 1970s, the 63-year-old – who earned the nickname 'The Man' during a glittering racing career – is not only one of the all time greats of the sport but also had much to do with increasing the popularity of motocross in the States.

After retiring from racing at the end of the 1980 season, De Coster moved to California to work as an advisor for Team Honda where he helped the team amass numerous AMA titles. Then in 1996 he returned to Suzuki, the manufacturer that helped him win his five world crowns.

Working with the great Jeremy McGrath in 1997, Roger then helped guide South African Greg Albertyn to Suzuki's first AMA championship in 18 years when, in 1999, Greg won the AMA 250cc National Motocross Championship.

Returning to Suzuki with the sole intention of 'putting the company back on top', De Coster has spent the past three years working with a rider that needs no introduction – Ricky Carmichael. Winner of an amazing 150 AMA motocross and supercross races and no less than 15 AMA championships, during his time with Suzuki RC – backed every step of the way by De Coster – has dominated the American MX scene.

DBR: Firstly, how hard is it going to be for you and Suzuki to fill the gap that Ricky will leave behind, not only at Suzuki but also within the US supercross and motocross scene in general?

RDC: "It will be immensely difficult. I don't know if there is a rider out there that can do that yet. There are a lot of riders that are very good and can win races on any given day but to do it over and over, well, like I said I don't think there is a rider out there that can do what Ricky has done.

"The most impressive thing in Ricky's career, for me, is that when James Stewart came into the main class there was no question that he was noticeably quicker than Ricky. When we went to Canada before the start of the 2006 season there was no contest. But by Anaheim

Ricky had picked up a lot of speed and was a full-on challenge for Stewart because he matched James' speed but kept his concentration. He ended up winning the championship."

DBR: It goes without saying that Ricky is a hugely skilful rider but while there are many extremely fast riders, Ricky has been able to win championships, come back from injury and win championships and switch manufacturers and win championships. What is it that Ricky has that so many other riders don't?

RDC: "He is the complete package. He surrounds himself with good people that are 100 per cent behind him and don't question his abilities even when he has a bad day. His parents are a huge help because they are very down to earth.

"I think a lot of riders or athletes in any sport become different when they start winning. They forget what got them to where they are in the first place. But Ricky remains extremely grounded and has a focused work ethic."

DBR: Do you think that because of the large salaries involved within US supercross and motocross now, some of the kids that were equally as talented as Ricky was as a youngster are losing their focus?

RDC: "Actually there is a negative side to Ricky and the other top racers' success and the general increase in the amount of money that is now available from within the sport today. Many riders are benefiting from the increases in the salaries of the top riders. Now what used to be paid to the champion in the top class is being paid to hopefuls.

"There are several Lites class riders that are getting paid more now than Jeremy McGrath got paid for three outdoor and one supercross championship. It's nice for those kids to make that money but it takes away a certain amount of reality. Motocross is a lot like bicycling in many ways in that it is a sport in which you take a lot of beatings both physically and mentally. If you want to push yourself to the extent that you want to win, it's tough. It is a very tough sport. It is very easy to

say that your leg or knee or back hurts and start making excuses when you have already made a nice salary for the year."

DBR: From the day you took up the position of team manager at Suzuki back in 1996 your goal was always to return the company to the winner's circle. How frustrating was it to fall just short of winning the 1997 supercross championship with Jeremy McGrath?

RDC: "When I came back to Suzuki our goal was always to put the company back on top. I had the opportunity to work with Jeremy McGrath early on which came a little quicker than expected. When I got the phone call from Jeremy it was eight days before the first race. I didn't want to miss the opportunity of working with Jeremy and Jeremy was really keen to ride for Suzuki so we went ahead and started working together. He won some supercross races, finished second in the series and had a good chance to win the championship.

"But I think we weren't 100 per cent ready to win and he was not 100 per cent ready because he wanted to do a private team and a lot of things were changing in his programme. We had a couple of mishaps and didn't win but the reason for not winning, I think, should be shared between both Suzuki and Jeremy. We kept working with the bike and knew that it was getting close."

DBR: Success with Greg Albertyn followed Jeremy's departure before Ricky signed for Suzuki. Were you confident that as a team you were ready – and had machinery good enough – for Ricky to win on?

RDC: "By the time the opportunity came to sign Ricky I knew that our bike was as good as anything out there and that we could give him the support that he needed. We were confident of that. When you are a top racer you can see what bikes are good enough to win on and when I spoke to Ricky I got the impression that he was aware that our bike was more than good enough to win on. We did a deal and things have worked out as well, if not better, than expected."

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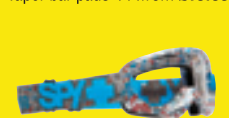
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"Ricky became more dominant than ever with Suzuki. It has been awesome for our team to work with him and great to be able to be a part of the winning successes. Now we have proven that we can do whatever other teams can do. Before that, riders thought that they needed to be on a Honda to win a championship. Maybe that was true in the 1980s but it's not true today."

DBR: Many riders seem to have an entourage or group of 'man friends' that shadow their every move nowadays. How important has Ricky's select group of nearest and dearest been in keeping him at the very top?

RDC: "I think that one of Ricky's strengths is that he has always remained focused and has never become sidetracked by all the riff-raff. He has a test track that is in the middle of nowhere, there isn't too much happening where his home is which means he has no distractions."

"He spends a great deal of time at his practice track which is 45 minutes from the nearest fast food place. He has a workshop, two supercross tracks and big outdoors track. His mum is tough on him and his dad is there to support him and prepare his tracks. He has a great trainer in Aldon Baker. He's not Ricky's friend – he's his trainer and he's tough."

DBR: Is it possible to pick out one moment from your time working with Ricky that in years to come you'll look back on more than any other?

RDC: "There are a lot of great moments from the first win to the last championship to his final outdoor race at Budds Creek. One cool moment was when he won at the Motocross of Nations in France a couple of years

back. The US team hadn't won for a few years and there was a drop in interest in the event in America. It was great winning the Chamberlain Trophy that day in front of such a huge crowd. Getting Suzuki's credibility back was also great. There isn't one moment but many."

DBR: There was a time when Ricky got a lot of flack from his so-called fans. Did Ricky ever talk to you about that time in his career when his public image wasn't as good as it is now and what was it that got him through that period?

RDC: "Yeah, we talked about it. Ricky realised that maybe with his focus on preparation and training the way it was that he might have overlooked his fans a little bit and didn't realise just how important they are."

"I think he started paying more attention to his fans and understanding that those fans, if you deal with them in the proper way, are going to be behind you forever. A lot of them will even carry you over into another sport if that's what you decide to do. I think it's very easy to influence your fans but it is also very easy to screw up."

"When Ricky rode for Honda for the first time at the US Open he was interviewed and said that his switch wasn't because of money. Whether it was or was not, I think it was the wrong thing to say at that time. It put him on the defensive. I think he went to Honda because there was still the belief at that time suggesting that they were superior. He should never have brought that up on that day and paid the price for it."

DBR: Everyone all around the world knows that Ricky's mum has had much to do with his success and is a hard taskmaster. What is the true relationship between Ricky and his parents?

RDC: "The relationship might seem a little strange but there are studies that have been done by psychologists that suggest that it's better to have a strong parent from the opposite sex if you are going to reach and compete at the highest level in sport. His dad is also always in the background. Sometimes if things get a little off-track and he hears that some things are getting a little out of hand he will step in. His mum has definitely worked hard for Ricky and both of his parents have always supported and encouraged him."

DBR: With Ricky now stepping away from Suzuki and motocross what are your hopes and thoughts as far as the next few seasons are concerned?

RDC: "Well, David Vuillemin is a very good test rider and we will have a new bike with certain things that we don't know too well. I am counting on him being able to help us with a lot of testing. Mike Alessi will be my main guy outdoors and Michael Byrne my main guy for supercross. Alessi won't win in supercross but I think he will be competitive and get some podiums and can finish between third and fifth."

DBR: Mike Alessi comes to Suzuki as a rider with a serious reputation...

RDC: "I've been warned and re-warned. We talked about many things when we agreed his contract. We have a system that we can fine him and even terminate the contract if things get out of hand."

"A lot of parents go overboard and don't know when to take a step backwards. I hope his dad understands the opportunity we are offering Mike. I need him to understand that he needs to take a step back and that having been able to support Ricky we are more than capable of helping Mike."



THE GOSPEL





Learning Curve

It's been a long, slow process but after six years in GPs Rui Goncalves has finally earned himself a factory ride...

Words and photos by Alex Hodgkinson

It's been a long, hard road through satellite teams but Rui Goncalves has finally made it to the big time. And after weeks of uncertainty at the end of the summer, the 22-year-old Portuguese didn't need to wait for the official proclamation with an orange letterhead when I asked him the latest at Budds Creek.

"I'll be racing for the KTM Red Bull factory team in 2008. That's what I've been working for all year, to get a factory ride. I already improved when I got on KTM the last two years and now a factory ride will be really good for me."

But the diminutive stylist from Vidago, high in the mountains in the north of Portugal, is also under no misapprehensions that he must deliver. "Now I've got the ride I need to show I can be in there every race. I've been a little inconsistent with some good races and some bad races until now but if you're going to be up there at the end of the year you have to be there every weekend."

It seems strange to realise that Rui will not be 23 until next summer

— he seems to have been around for so long. "Yes, I won the Portuguese SX title at 16, Casola were looking for a young rider, heard about me and I was plunged straight into GPs. I came as a little kid, leaving home to race the big-time and I've lived in Belgium ever since. I'm still young but I have a lot of experience."

"Two years Casola, two years Van Beers, two years Silver Action. I think I had a natural progression through those years but it was really slow. I was building up, just improving little things."

In four years on Yamaha Rui went 24-18-16-10 — nothing earth-shattering but enough to keep the teams interested. But it was at the '06 GP opener that Rui started to rock!

"It was when I stepped onto the KTM and started getting holeshots. Zolder was my first GP for KTM and I holeshot and led for many laps. That sort of thing gives you so much confidence, makes you feel so comfortable on the bike, being able to run up front for a time. And now, a year-and-a-half later, I can ride up front and finish on the podium."



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Rui leads Nico Aubin at Mantova



"It probably wasn't just the bike but when you change bike after four years and immediately see progress... My motivation was so high anyway to prove myself when I changed team and bike and when you start to see progression, it just gives you the incentive to work even harder and improve even more."

There were to be no podiums during 2006 but two helpings of double-figure scores virtually every weekend from mid-summer meant Rui saw off Searle, MacKenzie, Seb Pourcel and Swanny to be ranked seventh behind six full factory bikes. It was the perfect platform for '07 - but fate intervened.

An invitation to race in New Zealand in BT's home town of Taupo seemed great at the time and indeed Rui was going wheel to wheel with the '04 world champ when they touched. "I broke my arm and was out for two-and-a-half months which took me until the end of January. But then it was okay. I started riding again, everything was going well and I just had a silly crash at Lommel, lost the front wheel, got flipped over the bars, folded my arm under and landed on my shoulder. My collarbone just snapped.

"I mean, I'd only just got back on the bike and that meant I was effectively five months off the bike. I kept hoping right up to the last minute that I would be able to race Valkenswaard but it was never going to happen. I only rode four times before Spain and I could qualify so that was like a victory for me. Then I just kept stepping up my goals from week to week but the first half of the season was really difficult.

"Of course it was depressing. After what I had achieved in '06 I had expected more but I just needed to deal with it. When I finished 15th I just

had to keep on working to come back but it doesn't happen overnight. You can't go crazy. If you push too hard before you are 100 per cent ready again you can make another mistake so I just tried to build it slowly and by the second half of the year I was there."

The two seasons with Silver Action have been good for both rider and team with team manager Fulvio Crippa's outfit advancing to genuine factory support team and Rui being treated to full factory bikes by the end of the summer.

"I've had a good two years with Silver Action. They are a professional team with a good image and they have some good assistance from the factory. They are not factory but everybody in the team works hard, pushing to improve."

It was heart-breaking for all concerned to see podiums evaporate in the closing laps of GPs in both '06 and in Sweden last summer through mechanical DNFs but Rui looks on it philosophically. "KTM had won the MX2 world title in '04 with the SX250F but you have to remember that the production bike was very different and still quite new. My DNFs were not mistakes of the team, it's just the sort of things which happens with a new bike. If I had been racing for 20th we wouldn't even be talking about it but because I was headed for the podium everybody notices.

"But I never dwelt on that. I just took the good part - that I was fast enough to have been on the podium - and took that with me to the next race, looking to show that speed again. You know, I was still just on an SX at Uddevalla back in July."

By Namur, where that long-awaited podium finally came, Rui had full

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After podiums at Namur and in Ireland Rui struggled at the '07 British GP



Stefan Says

Pulling together

"I was already expecting a lot from him at the end of '06 but then he got hurt and it was difficult for him for the first half of 2007. But we started working together in the middle of the summer and it's worked out well."

So how come Rui can benefit so much from you, is it because he has a neat, easy style? "No, I think the single biggest thing is that he doesn't have half-a-dozen people in his other ear telling him what to do at the same time. He listens intensely to what I say and goes out and does it. He wants to succeed, has seen that what we have done together works and he wants more. We are both pulling together."

factory kit but that was not the only change in his life mid-summer. A certain Stefan Everts started to get involved. "We started working together three weeks before Sweden. I was still struggling to come back from my injury when we started to work together and that race was a sudden big step.

"Stefan has been awesome. He has been calling me to go riding and gives me some tips, some direction to my training but above all he gives me so much confidence. That's the biggest thing – it gives me confidence knowing he is there. He calls on all the experience he has and tries to transfer it to me. It's not easy because at the end of the day I am the one who has to do it but he knows how and his advice is invaluable.

"When I started with Stefan he got me riding 40-minute motos straight away to help the endurance. I was still a little bit out of pace coming from my injury but doing the 40 minutes he taught me to be consistent over an entire race. That's what he's been doing himself all these years, riding so consistently.

"We've been trials riding to try to help me learn his flowing style, standing on the footpegs and so on. I'm really looking forward to the future and hope that together we can make things work. I'm really happy that I have a guy like this behind me. The last years I have been working alone. I had Yves Demeulemeester as trainer but I didn't have anybody to help me on the track. Yves could control my physical training but he couldn't tell me how to ride, how to put it into effect in racing."

But after podiums at Namur and Moneyglass Rui was off the pace at Donington. "I just struggled with the track in England. Already on Saturday I was finding it difficult to set up the bike right there. It was just a bad weekend. But I just put it out of my mind and at Lierop I was back on the pace. And I just missed the podium again there even after crashing in the first race.

"Donington was not a good weekend for us but that's another good thing about Stefan. When you're struggling he looks for the good points and moves further. That is the attitude which won him so many championships."

But there are a couple of things which Rui has to sort out this winter

ADVERT

New Friends

Tommy

"We were together between Ireland and Donington, he's a nice kid. I guess he will be in England most of the time and I'll be in Belgium but I'm sure we will have some good fun together."

Tyla

"I never had any problems with Tyla. He's a good guy too, we've seen each other a lot in Belgium for a couple of years already and we have trained together before. The whole team looks great."



Rui's first ever podium came at Namur

before he challenges for the crown next summer. First up, it stands out that Rui usually performs better in race two.

"Yes. I have struggled a bit with armpump in the first motos. I was always loosened up for the second moto and that helps a lot. It's something I've always had. I ride a little tight in the first moto. It's something we have to work out for next year."

And by the time you read this Rui will have been under the knife. "I have a plate and seven screws in my right forearm which need to get taken out, also the pin I still have on my right collarbone. I've been riding a little bit like Robocop because of the plates. Once they're out I need to wait four to five weeks before I get back on a bike but then it's all systems go to get ready for 2008."

And, despite his supercross background, Rui is fully committed to the GPs. "I am contracted to the GP team for three years so I'll be a little bit old to think about SX after that anyway but I'm not thinking about America at all at the moment. I want to be focused on the GPs. KTM signed me to win something for them in the next three years and that has to be my aim."

"I guess the best way to start would be to holeshot Valkenswaard, lead all race and win. That would be perfect!"



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"A STUNTMAN NEEDS GUTS!"

AMERICAN IDOL!

The first American to win GP points, Bud Ekins was the founding father of the US dirt bike scene and a Hollywood stuntman who hung out with Steve McQueen

Words and photos by Jack Burnicle

WITH THE recent passing of Californian dirt bike legend Bud Ekins went a massive chunk of American off-road history.

Every motorcyclist knows the immortal, climactic moment from epic 1963 World War Two movie The Great Escape. Hounded by German soldiers, Steve McQueen attempts to leap his Triumph over two huge barbed wire fences. He clears the first then dramatically fails to make the second.

Only that darned handsome hero wasn't actually McQueen. It was his best mate Bud Ekins, renowned scrambler and cinema stuntman.

Bud was the first US dirt racer to venture across the Atlantic, to compete and score points in a European grand prix and to contest an International Six Day Trial – and his hospitality subsequently enabled early European adventurers to conquer the groundbreaking Inter-AM motocross series of the late sixties.

Referred to by other eminent Californian bike addicts as their 'founding father', nothing would be as it is now without this remarkable man!

In 1992, Roger de Coster promoted a third successive US 500 MX GP at Glen Helen. He kindly invited me to dinner at his house on the Pales Verdes peninsula overlooking LA and we got talking about his friend Ekins. Roger, now team manager of Makita Suzuki, first visited the States with his CZ team-mates Dave Bickers and Joel Robert, the trio dominating that inaugural Inter-Am in the Fall of 1967.

"Bud's Hollywood home was like a dormitory," smiled Roger fondly. "He and his wife made it possible for we European guys to come over. We only got paid 240 dollars to race and that covered everything – start money, prize money, expenses, the lot. So we all stayed with Bud!"

De Coster suggested I give Bud a call and to my amazement I ended up spending a day at his workshop in Sherman Oaks, North Hollywood. There I found a sharp-eyed, initially wary but ultimately amiable, startlingly tall, unkempt character with a comfortably rounded beer belly. "Yeah, a stuntman needs guts," he said with a sly grin!

Ekins and McQueen had been pals since Triumph-owning Steve, already starring in a TV series called 'Wanted: Dead or Alive', first visited Bud's Triumph dealership as a customer. Bike-mad McQueen started hanging out at the workshop, changing tyres and generally helping out with customer repairs. "Folk would come in with a flat and yell out for an assistant to fix it," remembered Bud, a twinkle in his eye. "You should've seen their faces when Steve McQueen came charging out from



But he threw that old Triumph higher and faster when they filmed the sequence the following day. "I got up to 12 feet and flew 65!"

Steve and Bud also collaborated on another smash-hit McQueen movie. 'Bullitt' features the most famous car chase in cinematic history. But the man at the wheel wasn't McQueen. "Steve was going to do all the driving and I was there just to be the biker who slides off his bike towards the end of the chase.

Then when shooting began he spun out on the first corner and nearly hit a cameraman. So the stunt coordinator said 'Bud, get into Steve's clothes'."

McQueen only took the wheel for close-ups and to avoid the A65 BSA that Ekins slung up the road!

Bud started messing with motorcycles in 1949. "My cousin got an old VL Harley," he chuckled. "He didn't know how it worked. So I looked at it, got it started and took a ride." The only people he knew with bikes raced them.

"So I started riding in the desert. 'Okay, let's go cow-trailing'. I thought that's what motorcycles were for – to ride on dirt roads!"

He raced the Harley, then bought a brand new Matchless – "they were winning everything" – and promptly won his first race on it. Within six months he was working with and sponsored by the West Coast distributor.

The six foot three inch Hollywood boy also began accumulating his famous collection of period bikes and cars as he

turned 20, paying 125 dollars for a 1915 Harley and sidecar in 1950! By the age of 22 Bud was winning almost everything in California but avidly read the weekly English bike papers. "Those great scramble races," he muttered wistfully. "I wanted some of that action. The English were the best in the world, so I went to England to learn to race."

Working for the Matchless distributor had given Ekins a direct connection with the factory in Woolwich, south east London. So he first ventured over in 1952, based himself close to the factory at Abbey Wood and attracted attention by jumping past works star Dave Curtis on the last lap of a Cambridge Matchless Club event. "I won a lot of little races round England," smiled Ekins. "Nothing big."

But he did become the first American winner of grand prix motocross championship points at Nymphsfield in the



the back, grabbed the flat and got to work!"

Ekins had already started doing bike stunts for the Hollywood studios when 'The Great Escape' came up. "Steve accepted the script on condition the director put a motorcycle chase sequence in," he grinned. "Then he asked me to come and double for him. I was teaching him to race at the time." So Bud built the two 1961 TR6 Triumphs which were used in the film and spent four-and-a-half months in Germany.

"We were due to shoot the jump on a Monday," recalled Ekins. "Me and Steve went down there on Sunday. The special effects man stood holding up a piece of string where the fence was supposed to be. We had shovels and we built a ramp and shaped the ground so we'd get more lift. I started two feet off the ground and worked up to nine feet or so, which was high enough to clear the string."



was armed with his mum's Kodak Brownie camera. After art college he mixed life as a graphic designer, magazine art director, photographer and part-time art college tutor with motocross and photo-journalism. Now he's a commentator, painting pictures with words. He never did get a proper job...

JACK BURNICLE is the godfather (our words, not his) of British MX journalism. Born in Billingham, County Durham, to Bella and nutty (his words, not ours) musical genius Stan Burnicle, Jack was mad about cars and motor racing as a kid. At sweet 16 he got a motorbike, rode it to a local 'scramble' and was instantly, hopelessly hooked. Next time he went he

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AMERICA'S DIRT
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BUD EKINS



Cotswolds where the inaugural British GP was held that September. Bud still had the yellowing pages of 'Motor Cycle Weekly' with a dramatic photograph of him nicking fifth place in a race for the line with Bill Barugh. The winner was Brian Stonebridge, ahead of Phil Nex, Derek Rickman and the first-ever European champion, Belgian Victor Leloup. Pretty distinguished company!

"In America, a series of bumps and everyone slowed down," said Ekins. "There, they'd shift up to 60 miles an hour and go over the top of them. I got so far ahead that the next five to seven years of my racing over here in California were easy."

Posters pasted on the wall of his workshop confirmed Bud's domination of West Coast competition in those early days. Average desert races would attract five or six hundred entries. He won the 'Big Bear' three times, numerous AMA National Scrambles Championships at places like Gator Bowl and the Catalina Grand Prix on Catalina Island, 20 miles off the Pacific coast of LA.

But back in the fifties crossing the Atlantic wasn't so easy! "You needed youth and dedication," explained Ekins. "A six-day drive to New York, then nine days on a boat to Southampton. A train ride from there to London and a cab ride to Woolwich!"

His newspaper cuttings confirmed the pioneering spirit of one such trip. In July 1955 he was sidetracked in Pennsylvania by a bunch of guys with bikes on trailers. "I asked them where the race was," he said. "They said Snow Valley, north of New York City. I drove out there the next morning. They knew of me. Would I like to ride? You bet! They had this brand new 500 Triumph I could use. We took the headlight and muffler off and I rode the race and won it!"

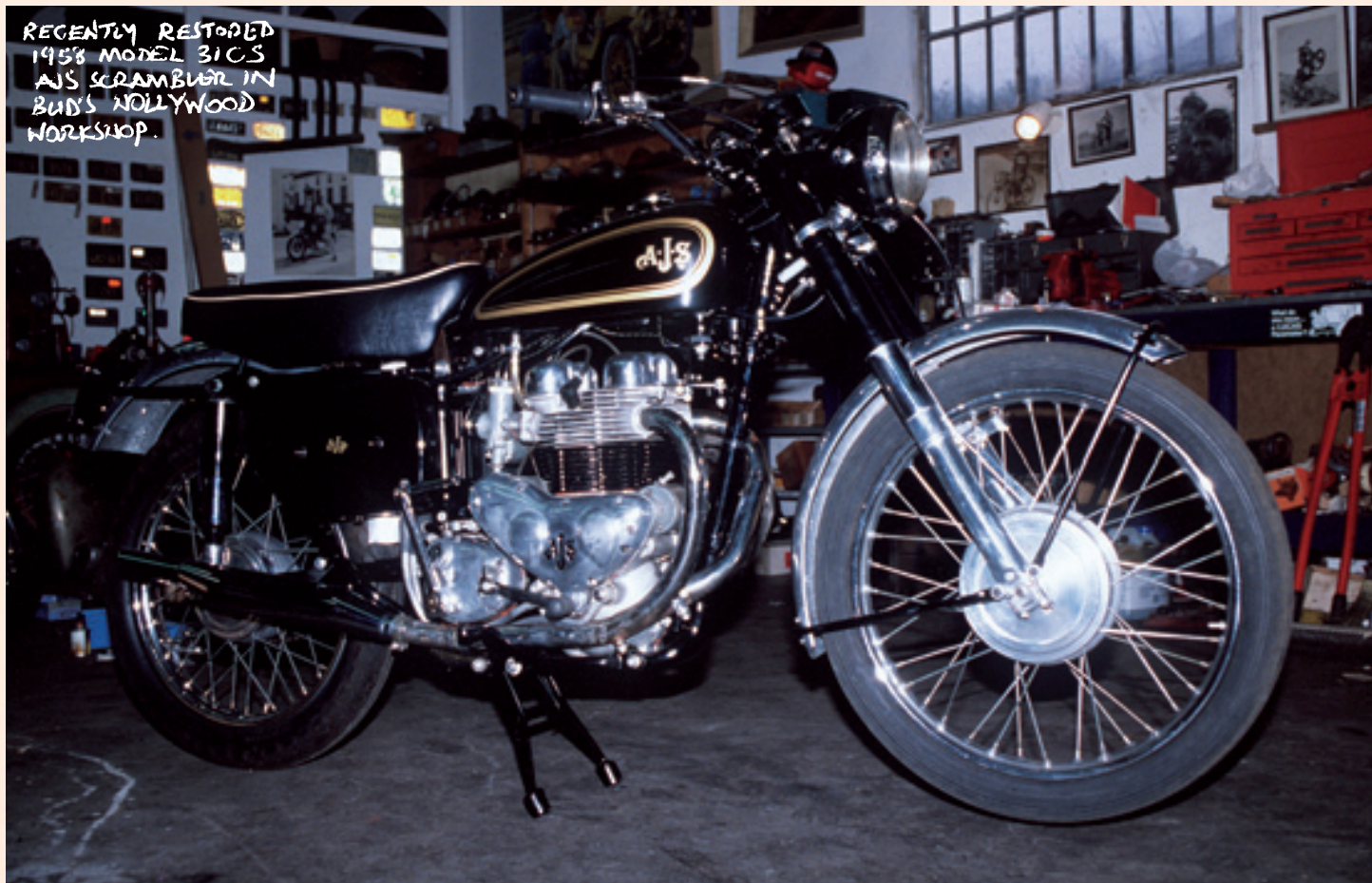
The cutting confirmed it was a Triumph Trophy that Bud couldn't fire up. 'By the time he got it running, Don Pink of Yonkers, New York, on a Harley Davidson, was half-a-lap in front on a narrow, awkward half-mile course'. Bud passed local idol Pink to win by 50 yards!

He had changed that year from Matchless to Triumph. "I was running flat-out on a long straight, late '54, somewhere near Ipswich, when Johnny Giles and Ron Stellow passed me on two Triumphs. They had just come out with swingarms and were the prototypes for the '55 bikes. The writing was on the wall."

Ekins returned home and demanded a ride. Good, said Triumph. But their dealer in the San Fernando Valley was closing down so they offered Bud the franchise. He was a Triumph dealer for 17 successful years. "The biggest in the world," he boasted proudly. "Sold over 300 one year." He also became a Honda agent in 1960, a year after first contesting the ISDT at Llandrindod Wells in Wales.

He regularly entered the ISDT, winning four golds and a silver medal. "I was in Munich filming 'The Great Escape' in 1962 when the Six Days came up in Garmisch. I got a week off and won the 650 class with a bike Triumph flew out from England. It had six miles on the clock when it started the Six Days and 1200 on at the end!" He arched his bushy

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eyebrows in disbelief. "When I found the damn bike 25 years later it had 2400 miles on the clock. I gave the guy a thousand bucks for it and sent it over to Eric Cheney!"

Bud subsequently recruited America's first Vase team comprising himself, his brother Dave, Cliff Coleman and his new pal Steve McQueen. "That was about 1964 or '65," reflected Bud, scratching his white whiskers thoughtfully. "I'd gone as an individual until then. We were winning in East Germany when I ran into a bridge and broke my leg."

Three of this illustrious quartet later used their ISDT bikes to race 1000 miles through Mexico. "We had two 500s and two 650s. Took us 39 hours. Myself, Cliff Coleman, my brother Dave and Eddie Molner." This brave venture founded the fabled Baja 1000!

The old stuntman remained in the movie business through his daughter Susan, an executive Hollywood producer, making appearances in movies like Sylvester Stallone's 'The Specialist' (as a cop) and the Kurt Russell blockbuster 'Soldiers' (as a tank driver!). His only regret was not hanging on to his 'Great Escape' Triumph.

"Schwarzenegger's got this restaurant," wheezed American's original dirt bike icon. "He heard I still had the bike and wanted it. I should've just gone and built him one!"

Regarding his vital role in bringing over those early European motocross pioneers, Bud shrugged his mighty shoulders modestly. "I was just returning a favour. People like Eric Cheney used to put up with me when I came over."

He spent his later years immaculately restoring mainly British street scramblers for export back to England, enjoying his massive collection of rare cars and bikes and still returning regularly to the UK where he rode a 1952 Matchless every August in the Irish Six Day Motorcycle Rally.

Only half-a-century later Bud Ekins, the original US pioneer, didn't have to drive, ride, sail and railroad his route halfway across the world!



CHILE CON CARNAGE!

Testing terrain sees the world's top enduro riders dropping like flies but Italy get five to the finish to win the ISDE

Words and photos by JONTY EDMUNDS

Chris Hockey picks up a pretty nasty hand injury but keeps going to the end



BROKEN DREAM

SALMINEN 'SQUALIFIED' >>

Without question the biggest name to fail to finish this year's ISDE is Finnish Trophy Team rider Juha Salminen. Outright winner at last year's six days in New Zealand, many expect the seven-time world champion to once again rule supreme.

And that's kind of what he looks like he might do early on in the week. Making his first international E2 class outing of '07 having claimed the E1 world title with ease, Juha finishes second on day one behind Frenchman Johnny Aubert before topping the class on day two. With Aubert moving back to the top spot on day three Juha makes an uncharacteristic mistake on an extremely rocky special test and – lucky not to have broken his arm – drops close to one minute to finish fifth.

But things get worse for Juha and on day four his race comes to a premature end. Heading towards the day win – and within sight of the end of the final special test – his bike stops. Stranded in soft sand he accepts a helping hand from a group of enthusiastic locals and is later disqualified for accepting outside assistance. Not that he really had any choice – if he hadn't he'd probably still be there pushing!



Kurt Caselli is in impressive form for Team USA and sets the early pace



Despite losing time with a bust radiator Greg Evans puts in a strong performance



Jari Mattila and the rest of the Finnish team have a nightmare



Euan McConnell battles through the pain barrier

Thanks to strong and consistent performances from five of their six Trophy Team, Italy top the 82nd running of the International Six Days Enduro staged in La Serena, Chile.

Okay, that's not the whole truth. The Italian cause is given a massive boost by Finns Juha Salminen and Eero Remes failing to make the finish. And even that's still not the whole truth! The reality of the situation is that the mighty Finns effectively stop themselves from winning as two of their top riders – Mika Ahola and Samuli Aro – decide to give the event a miss.

"It's a fantastic result for us," says Alessandro Belometti, Italy's number one performer. "We

didn't have the strongest team but we all rode well and that is what counts at the six days. We lost one of our riders due to injury but apart from that everything went well for us. It means a lot to us to win."

With Italy claiming the prized number one spot in the Trophy Team competition and Finland placing an eventual 16th, France claim the runner-up spot thanks in part to the event's overall fastest rider Johnny Aubert. Expected to be the rider to challenge Salminen for the E2 class win, Johnny goes one better and not only claims the class victory but also wins his first ever ISDE outright.

Third, having lost their team captain Bjorne

Carlsson on day three, are Sweden. Like many countries the yellow and blue team fail to field their strongest squad but the Swedes do enough to round out the event ahead of Holland who pull off one of the surprise results of the competition in fourth.

Helped by the numerous sand special tests the Dutch squad place two minutes ahead of Great Britain who, despite a few hiccups and not having David Knight competing for them, manage a fighting fifth. With two of the Trophy Team forced to ride close to half the event injured the fifth place result is a creditable one.

Britain's highest finisher in class is KTM-mounted Tom Sagar. Switching to a



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factory-prepped 250cc four-stroke for the event having piloted a 450 all season, the ISDE proves to be a real learning experience for the newly-crowned British Enduro Champion. Ninth on day one before falling to 12th in class on day two, Tom bounces back on days three and four before going on to claim fourth in the E1 class.

Britain's fastest rider in the event is Suzuki-mounted Paul Edmondson. Having raced in his first ISDE in '86 Eddy shows that he still has what it takes to mix it with the world's fastest riders despite his laidback approach to the event. With his worst class position being seventh and his best fifth during the first five days of the event, Paul claims an eventual seventh in the E2

class to do his bit for the British Trophy Team.

Coming home 19th in the E1 class is British Junior Trophy Team member Greg Evans. Surprising everyone in the British camp with an amazing result, Greg's fortunes go from good to bad as a slow speed fall holes one of his KTM's radiators which drops him way down the results. But Greg puts his disappointment behind him to finish the week with more solid results and just manages to break into the top 20.

The only E3 class rider in the British Trophy Team, Euan McConnell finds himself in the wars on day three as a fall results in a nasty cut to his left forearm. Disappointed with his day one result of 13th in class, Euan improves to seventh on

day two before his day three crash curtails his climb up the E3 class results. Struggling through day four, the experienced team member jumps to eighth in class on days five and six to end a challenging week in a well-deserved 13th in class.

For the remaining British Trophy and Junior Trophy members it's a week of mixed fortunes. Yamaha rider Ollie Moyce's trouble-free week results in him claiming 34th in the E2 class while Chris Hockey battles against a badly injured hand to finish one place behind in 35th. For Ed Jones a 'steady' week ends on day five when his bike unexpectedly stops on the opening test putting him out of the event. >>



JOHNNY DONE GOOD

AUBERT ON TOP >>

Competing in only his second ISDE – he made his six days debut last year in NZ – Frenchman Johnny Aubert quickly establishes himself as one of only a handful of riders fast enough to win the event outright.

The only rider likely to be able to battle against Salminen, Johnny starts the event as he means to finish it by winning the E2 class – despite failing to finish ahead of on-form US rider Kurt Caselli who tops the overall results on day one. But as the week wears on Aubert shows why he will be a hard rider to beat in the '08 E2 world championship as he consistently finishes at or near the sharp end of both the E2 and overall results.

Getting stronger as the week progresses, Aubert comfortably tops the E2 class and gives Yamaha the much-coveted – yet officially unrecognised – overall win as well. Two minutes faster than any other rider in the competition, Aubert's understandably delighted with his performance.

"Maybe this year there weren't as many top riders competing but when Juha Salminen is there you know that you will have to ride extremely well to win," comments Johnny. "It was disappointing that Juha had some problems because we were having a very good fight. Six days is a long time and with the terrain as hard as it is anything can happen. I'm really pleased with my result and to have been able to help the French Trophy Team as well."

In only his second ISDE former GP motocross star Johnny Aubert takes the overall win

HARD KNOCKS!

TERRAIN TAKES ITS TOLL >>

According to many of the riders competing in La Serena, this year's event is more demanding than difficult due to the numerous hour-long time controls and particularly unforgiving terrain.

With each day being warm and windy it's rocks, sand and dust that are the common elements throughout the week. With the first two days taking place south of the start area and featuring some spectacular ocean-side special tests, days three and four head inland and see sand replaced by stones and rocks as dry riverbeds play host to more than one of the special tests.

Day five heads north and is a mixture of sand, desert and rocks with the final motocross staged close to the start/finish area where event officials have spent a week sculpting the wind-swept beach sands of the Pacific Ocean.



After a couple of days getting used to a 250F Tom Sagar comes into his own



Mechanical problems put Ed Jones out on day five

RESULTS

WORLD TROPHY >>

- 1 Italy** (Alex Salvini E1, Alessandro Belometti E2, Alessandro Botturi E3, Maurizio Micheluz E1, Fabrizio Dini E2, Andrea Belotti E3),
- 2 France** (Johnny Aubert E2, Fabien Planet E3, Damien Miquel E1, Julien Gauthier E1, Jordon Curvalle E3, Nicolas Deparros E2),
- 3 Sweden** (Joakim Ljunggren E2, Andreas Toresson E1, Patrick Wicksell E3, Peter Bergvall E1, Fredrick Georgesson E1, Bjorne Carlsson E3),
- 4 Holland** (Ralph Hubers E1, Hans Vogel E2, Erwin Plekkenpol E3, Amel Advokaat E2, Alex van de Broek E2, Mark Wassink E3),
- 5 Great Britain** (Tom Sagar E1, Paul Edmondson E2, Euan McConnell E3, Dylan Jones E1, Chris Hockey E2, Edward Jones E1)

WORLD JUNIOR >>

- 1 Spain** (Cristobal Guerrero E1, Oriol Mena E1, Lorenzo Santolino E2, Carlos Andreu E2),
- 2 France** (Marc Bourgeois E1, Christophe Nambotin E3, Jean Charles Gilbert E2, Julian Dubac E1),
- 3 Finland** (Antti Hellsten E1, Olli Turma E1, Roni Nikander E1, Patrick Wikman E2),
- 4 Australia** (Josh Strang E2, Christopher Hollis E1, Jarrod Bewley E2, Blake Hore E2),
- 5 Chile** (Vincente Isreal E2, Josue Smith E3, Cristobal Urrutia E3, Daniel Gouet E1)

Dylan Jones puts in a consistent week to come home 24th in E1



Fast Eddy's top Brit a full 20 years after his first ISDE

Dylan Jones puts in a consistent week to finish 24th in the E1 class while Lee Edmondson drops time on day three when his fuel tank springs a leak. Managing to fix the problem, Lee soldiers on to place 45th in the E1 class aboard his Honda.

But without question the cruellest of luck is that suffered by Junior Trophy Team member Ashley Wood. Competing in his second ISDE and his first as a British team member, Ashley finds himself out of the event with a mechanical problem without even managing to complete the

event's opening special test. Having travelled halfway around the world, Ashley's well and truly gutted. Despite Ashley's early exit from the competition and even with Lee's problems on day three and Greg's problems on day two the British Junior Trophy team manage to make it home in 10th.

Topping the Junior Trophy Team competition is Spain. Helped by UFO Yamaha rider Cristobal Guerrero who places as runner-up in the E1 class, the Spanish team finish comfortably ahead of France with Finland third.

In the individual classes Finland's only victory comes thanks to Jari Mattila who, competing on a 250cc four-stroke for the first time ever, tops the E1 class ahead of Guerrero and Italian motocrosser Alex Salvini with Sagar fourth.

In E2 Aubert's comfortably ahead of Belometti with EJ world champ Joakim Ljunggren fairing well in his first senior competition. At the head of the E3 category, US rider Kurt Caselli claims an impressive two-stroke powered win beating Finn Mark Tarkkala as Frenchman Fabien Planet makes it an all KTM podium.

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TOMTOM!

YOUNG WILTSHIRE LAD TOM ROGERS KNOWS EXACTLY WHERE HE WANTS TO GO – TO THE FRONT OF THE PACK

Words and photos by still-mx.co.uk

Despite only riding for just over four years, Wiltshire-based rider Tom Rogers exhibits the skills of someone with many more years of experience under his belt. After I cracked off some shots of the young rider at the excellent Cusses Gorse practice track near Salisbury I headed back to the pits to find out more from the young man himself.

Rage: You are looking really smooth out on the track – how long have you been riding?

TR: "I have been riding since I was six years old, riding in the back garden and as I got better I started to ride up at Cusses Gorse. People used to say to my dad 'why is he not racing?'. It wasn't until then I started to ride club meetings and I have progressed since then so all in all I have been racing for four years."

Rage: How did it all start for you, what made you want to take up the sport?

TR: "I used to watch people at Cusses Gorse and on the TV and through that it gave me the inspiration to give it a go. Ever since I saw others on motocross bikes I automatically wanted to ride so my dad bought me a rev and go and from the instant I took my first steps into the motorcycle world it felt natural to me."

Rage: You have come a long way in such a short time as far as racing is concerned.

So what do you put that down to?

TR: "I love to ride my KTM and I watch a lot of DVDs which motivates me to push myself as I like to do well and take on new challenges. It's cool that I have such a good practice facility not too far away and the combination of watching and learning from the DVDs and seeing top riders in action really does help bring you on."

Rage: You finished an impressive fifth overall in the Elite Youth Cup with some good results on the way – how did the rest of your 2007 season pan out?

TR: "Well I rode Canada Heights early in the year and finished second there – that track is mint, one of the best in my opinion. The BSMA nationals went well until the second from last round at Whiteway Barton where I had two DNFs due to bike problems. The Elite series was awesome and very hard work but I really enjoyed it and pushed hard to finish fifth overall."

Rage: There is some stiff competition out there in the youth races. What rider do you most rate that you ride alongside in the various championships?

TR: "Jamie McCanney is a very strong rider especially on sand. There are so many riders that are capable of racing well and this can only help the sport in years to come as these riders come through the ranks."

Rage: What lies ahead for you in 2008?

TR: "Well I am really focused for 2008 and I am doing the Elite again also the BYMX and YSMA Super National and as many national events as possible."

Rage: Have you been able to gain any sponsorship and have you found it difficult?

TR: "Yes, I have sponsorship from Dunlop tyres, Putoline Oils, Sixsixone and a few others are in the pipeline at the moment. Local businesses that help me are Hendy Ford, Tag Scaffolding, A1 Roadcraft, Ruby Roofing Supplies, MCM Shopfitters and Howdens Joinery."

"I would just like to say a big thank you to all of them for their support now and in the future. Biggest thanks of all though goes to mum and dad as without them this would not be possible."

Rage: For the next few months there will be less time available for riding due to potentially bad weather and a lack of race meetings. What do you intend on doing to come out race fit and ready for the challenge of the new season?

TR: "I do a lot of swimming and running now and have a fitness programme that I follow. I will spend a lot of time at Cusses Gorse practising. We will also spend some time in France, Holland and Belgium practising through the winter."

Rage: Thanks Tom. Good luck next season!

BLADES OF GLORY!

THE 2007 FWSX SERIES KICKS OFF IN SHEFFIELD – CITY OF STEEL!

Round one of the fantastic 2007 Wulfsport Future West supercross series kicks off in its perennial starting place – that's Sheffield's Hallam FM Arena – with a whole host of top British, American and European youth racers on hand to battle it out for hard-earned points, prizes and – for the podium placers – some sparkling lemonade.

Just qualifying for the mains of the five packed-out classes is an

achievement in itself and the lucky 12 from each group who get to perform in front of the packed arena come Saturday evening all do their best to put on a great show.

There are still three rounds of the four-round championship left to run in Liverpool which is a double header and London so everything's still to play for. Hook up to the official www.fwsx.com website for more details on this year's exciting championship.

MAX!

THE NEW KTM FACTORY RIDER FOLLOWS UP BACK-TO-BACK WINS AT SHEFFIELD AND BERCY WITH A SIX-DAY STINT AT THE MINI Os...

Hi guys! The new bike's great! We had been training a lot with Tommy Searle before Sheffield at our SX track. It was nice to train with him and see how he got on with the track.

It's always good to come home and race in England. The guys from Dirt Wurx did a great job this year with the track. Also it was my first race on the new machine (KTM) and it felt great. Practice and the heat went well putting me on pole for the final. I got a good gate (no surprise because I was on a rocket) and blasted a few laps, settling for a comfortable lead. It was the fifth time in a row that I have won this race.

After having some fun at Sheffield we were back home training but this time with Mike Brown. I also had an early Christmas with my mum and grandparents because we will be in America for Christmas. Then we were on our way back out to Bercy. Since my victory last year I have been looking forward to defending my title as Prince of Bercy. The track was really technical but great fun. It was me versus the Frenchies including European champion Jason Clermont and French SX champion Jordi Tixer!

Timed training went well on the Friday apart from when on my last lap about 10 metres before the finish I landed on another rider. I ended up second to Clermont. I got a good gate in the final and took the early lead. I gradually edged away putting in some smooth, fast laps to take the victory.

On the Saturday I set pole by 1.054 sec. I got another great start and was making good progress until I hit a hay bale and did some freestyle! I lost one position to Jordi but quickly got by him next lap in the whoops. I managed to not make any more mistakes to settle for yet another victory.

On the final day I again set some good times and took pole in timed training. Yet again I took the holeshot on the factory KTM but this time Jason Clermont actually made it around the first turn and tried to tag on. But yet again I put in some good laps and edged away.

We flew out the next day to Los Angeles and went straight into testing with the team and then flew on to Florida for the Mini Os! The race is like many of the nationals over there, taking place over six days but the one difference here is that the first three are supercross and the last three motocross.

The bike had been running great and with an amazing team around me everything was going well. I won my Stock class heat to go into the finals in pole. In the Mod class I qualified in second to my team-mate Jason Anderson and in the Supermini I also ran second. They were only to qualify you to the main events and get your gate pick.

I got off to a good start in the Stock class and was in second right behind Anderson. Just before the whoop section I slid out on a corner and lost a few positions. I re-passed a few guys but ran out of time and ended up third. For the Modified class I took the holeshot but went wide on the first turn and Jason slipped underneath me. We had a great battle the whole race and went across the finish with only half a bike's length between us with me taking second. My start wasn't so good in the Superminis. I went into the second corner in fourth and came out in nearly last after I hit someone and caused a massive pile-up! With only four laps I didn't really have a chance to catch back up.

With the SX taken care of the heavens opened and flooded the whole track. My heats went okay. I ran second in both Modified and Supermini with good battles and a close finish. In my Stock class I went down pretty big off the start but still managed to qualify for the main which was good.

I got off to a good start in the Stock final and was battling for the lead when I picked up a front puncture! In the Supermini it was the first time I messed up the gate for the whole week so I knew it wasn't going to happen again in the next moto. I was quite a ways back so I just had some fun.

I got out to the early lead in the Mod class. With a few mishaps I dropped back to fourth but had a good ride. It just wasn't my day but I learnt a lot.

Max
dirtbikerider 127



Lewis King is top man in the Lites class



Ben Watson wins the 65cc Main Event



Max Bickers leads the Auto charge

RESULTS SHEFFIELDSX

AUTOS

1 Jamie Clark, 2 Keenan Hird, 3 Tommy Schofield, 4 Max Bickers, 5 Camlann McDonald, 6 Alfie Mountfort

65cc

1 Ben Watson, 2 Tom Neal, 3 Max Acres, 4 George Turner, 5 Alfie Bowtell, 6 Josh Coleman

SW85cc

1 Logan Karnow, 2 Daniel Clark, 3 James Dunn, 4 Brady Ward, 5 Ryan Butler, 6 Harry Brady

BW85cc

1 Max Anstie, 2 Jamie Rayner, 3 Luke Norris, 4 Ben Reed, 5 Ross Clarke, 6 Jake Millward

YOUTH LITES

1 Lewis King, 2 Jordan Booker, 3 Per Kristan Bakke, 4 Gavin Foulston, 5 Joe Gregory, 6 Tom Bennett

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HAPPY SNAPPERS!

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15-year-old Suzuki riders Conor and Kristian Johnstone are going to be fighting over this month's new Happy Snappers top prize – a signed James Stewart Fox jersey – thanks to these cracking shots that their dad Marcus has taken. If you're not sure who's who, Conor can be seen bailing out while Kristian's keeping it rubber side down.

If you want your picture printed in DBR and some top MX merchandise of your own like Conor and Kristian then send us your favourite riding shot – maybe of you busting a berm, pulling a sick whip or simply gooning it up. If your picture is deemed to be the best by our expert panel of judges you'll not only win a Ride MX star prize but you'll also get your picture published in next month's Rage.

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THE DIRTIS

THE SHOWBIZ GLITTERATI HAVE THEIR OSCARS AND EMMYS SO HERE WE GO WITH THE 2007 RAGE DIRTIS....

COMPULSIVE WATCH – SCOT JAMES

A tough one this... While Richie Worrall, the McCanney brothers, Scott Elderfield and David Games have all been all-action knees and elbows – throwing all kinds of shapes and providing 24 carat entertainment all season – one guy still stands out above them all. Scot James is a complete enigma at times but utterly brilliant when he's on it...

OUTSTANDING ENDEAVOUR – CONNOR WALKLEY

In a season where he has been at a real disadvantage giving away at least two years in age to the rest of the field and hauling more weight than most on an 85cc machine, Connor has put in race after race of real quality and he's ultra consistent too. Jack Rowland and Lewis Trickett deserve a mention too for a season of stonking rides in the 125s as two of the younger guys in the field.

HARDPACK HERO – DAN THORNHILL

With a series of absolutely storming races at Landrake and Brookthorpe in particular, Dan has proved to be the King of Hardpack throughout 2007 beating off a strong challenge for the title from Josh Spinks, Lewis Trickett, and Ben Field.

BROKEN SPOKES AWARD – MEL POCKOCK

While Robbie Muscat and Corie Southwood also missed out on national championship podiums in the final weeks of the season through injury, Mel's outstanding run of bad luck just about tips it in his favour.

CRASH OF THE YEAR – LEWIS TOMBS

For me Lewis Tombs trying to cap a real gusher at Culham in the final round of the Elite just gets it over Luke Dean being torpedoed at Matchams by Brad Pocock.

RIDER OF THE YEAR – BEN WATSON

An incredible 24 wins from 28 starts in BYMX competition and looking majestic at virtually all times – just the best stats of the year for the Watson Boy Wonder.

COMEBACK KID – SCOTT ELDERFIELD

After the nightmare of serious injury last year it's great to see Scott back and as spectacular as ever.

ONE TO WATCH – LUKE HAWKINS

Luke hasn't had the best of luck with injuries but the smart money is on him for big wheel silverware next season.

Happy Snappers

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Age.....

Postal address.....

Daytime telephone number.....

Email.....

Photographer's name.....

Photographer's tel number.....

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TRUCKIN' HELL!

WHO NEEDS A SWANKY MERC WHEN YOU CAN GIVE IT BEANS IN A BEAT-UP BLUE PICK-UP?

RECENTLY I bought myself a little blue pick-up truck – nowt fancy, no big bling wheels or sound systems, just a standard old blue pick-up to hack around in. I got the idea after listening to Jamie Dobb telling me to RENT a sweet ride for a year. Yeah, rent! I didn't get it either – why would I wanna waste money on something that isn't even mine? So I done the opposite, bought an Auto Trader and looked for the s****est looking thing in there! There were a couple to choose from but I knew when I saw it that it was the one! 130,000 miles, two-seater, lots of room for a bike! Perfect.

First thing I did was drive it to Jamie's mansion to show him – I think he was even embarrassed to have it sitting on his driveway! But, hell, I'm like 10K better off than I would be if I had gone with his really clever idea of renting a Merc! I'm pumped! It's called Big Foot and since I've been back home in Scotland it has been the main source of banter during the rainy days!

The route to the gym in the morning has a few little rally routes. There's one jump, a couple bends where you can light the rear end up with a heavy dump of the clutch and, well, that's about it. But it's enough to have me excited about driving to the gym! Every day I pick Bry up at 8.30am and we bomb down the road leading to the sports centre. We've been steadily hitting the bridge jump a little faster every day – we started off at 60mph and built up by 5mph a day until we felt we reached the limit. It's easy to go over the top on the roads – kind of like how we do on our bikes sometimes – but there's no protection so after we launched it at 75mph we've kind of backed it off a little now!

On the way back it was the same, trying to light the rear up and get it drifting at every opportunity. It had been raining so the roads were pretty slick and we were literally 20 metres from Bryan's house when I tried to get the back end out on a left-hand off-camber. I dumped the clutch but the wheels didn't slide so I was still going pretty straight. I jumped on the brakes but it was all too late, we skidded straight into the opposite neighbour's hedge and made him a new parking place! Boys will be boys eh? Safe to say we drive like adults now!

Another time we were coming back from the local practice track at Duns. There's a little dirt track road on the way that if you get right would save ya a couple seconds. Bry and I were behind another motocross van and I was blasting out 'Uptown Girl' by Westlife – a CD I found while clearing out my dad's garage – when we decided to go for it, hitting the horn to get the sheep out the way. There were rain ruts and unexpected bumps and we were going down at around 20-30mph which is pretty fast considering the steepness of it! It was going well and we were holding on tight – I was trying to avoid any bumps and ruts but by the end it was impossible and we hit the biggest bump and bounced out onto the road in front of the other MX van, my stand bounced out onto the road and we had to stop and strap everything up again! Good fun though!

We still had a couple weeks to kill before training

started again so we all took up a bit of golf. Seems everyone is doing it these days so I got myself up the local course to try my hand. On my first attempt I scored a 119 on a par 70 or something? Pretty shocking but it was my first time and I beat Bry by one! But since then he has been back up and scores under 100 so I need to get back up there. I just like driving them! It's sweet when you get a good drive – I may just be a driving range pro like Happy Gilmore.

We had a karting tournament recently. Big Dave McVie, the guy who owns Duns track, had an invitational up at the local Raceland. As you all know or can imagine, motocross riders and go-karts are a slightly good and bad pick and mix. We can hit the apex and get the power on at the right times but we also know how to punt the driver in front through the tyres! Bryan smoked us all, Johnny Hamilton was second and my brother passed me with four laps to go to claim the final podium position. I was mad! I hate getting beat by my brother – he's slowly making a list of all the things he can kick my ass at and it's getting bigger!

So we've started training again and hell it's tough. I've been flat-out twice a day for a couple weeks now and it's time to stop the s**t food, fizzy drinks and late nights. Gym at 9am, out by 11am. Home, grab a recovery drink, sleep for an hour then running at 1pm! It's tough to get back into it but I'm really enjoying getting some routine back. Our off-season always throws me because we miss out on so much during the season so I always try cram as much in as I can in that one month. Holidays, other sports, nights out with old friends, it all adds up – so much so that some nights I don't even get to sleep!

But sleep isn't a problem now and this is the first day that I've been late going out for my run. It's 1.30pm now as I write this and Bry came round for me all suited up at 1pm to find me crashed out in my bed. As I got up he sat down to watch Lost while I got ready and he fell asleep! So right now he has climbed up into my little bunk bed thing and hasn't made a peep! It's important to remember that rest is just as important so if we are both this tired it's worth having an hour before we train.

It's nice being home again. I've been living away from home since I was 16 but it feels now like I have everything I need at home – tracks, training facilities and Edinburgh Airport on the doorstep. I'm looking forward to next season, I feel comfortable with what I'm doing and I think having a solid routine and structure is what's going to help me make that top step more often. The winter really makes Edinburgh a beautiful place and most nights I'm grabbing some food there or walking round the German market in the gardens with friends. It's good to be home!

I'm guessing this issue's out in December so everyone have a brilliant Christmas and New Year. I'm jetting off to France over New Year for some skiing with Bryan and Stevie. We are meeting up with Easy out there too so it should be awesome fun! And remember, next time you see me I'll be in red!

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